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'SORDELLO.'

READERS, and even students, of Mr. Browning, shy at 'Sordello.' Mr. Hutton gives it up. Mr. Roden Noel expressly puts it aside, for he cannot make out its constructions. Mrs. Orr, in her hand-book, does her best, but plainly feels it an ungrateful task to spend time upon it. And no wonder. Mr. Browning himself calls his poem a "Quixotic attempt." Perplexity, bewilderment, is not the word to express the state of feeling which comes over the mind of the reader when he first opens the book, expecting that language will guide him along the threads of thought to an upshot, more or less distinct, of meaning. His first reading leaves him aghast. Where is he, and what is he among? He is to hear a story told: the story begins, stops for a parenthesis, stops for an address to Shelley, proceeds, breaks off, goes back at a jump thirty years, and we are transported, or rather have to find our way to an entirely different scene and different associations, and so, by hints, and pictures, and enigmas, to yet another set of circumstances, which follow like slides in a magic lantern. But what is the story all about? We find at last a running commentary at the top of the page; but that is probably not an early discovery, and we go on hoping to find the clue, not outside, but in the poem itself. And yet it is not a thing to put down. We feel that we are in strong hands, and with eyes that have

really seen—seen, with keenness, with trouble, with thought—only their owner is not disposed to save us any trouble in making us see what he has seen. It all has the oddness and unexpectedness of a dream, where the things which happen, though they never surprise us, do not happen the least in the common order, and are not connected with the usual associations, familiar in waking life. Yet there come in flashes of sympathy, which illuminate dark depths of the heart, which we thought no one knew or imagined but ourselves. There come tracts of pictured landscape, like the background of some great Umbrian or Venetian painter—background only, with perhaps an unintelligible foreground and action.

"That autumn eve was stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky."

Like Turner's pictures in his later manner—when he is clear, he is very clear: when he is obscure, he is very obscure. And then the language: it is like unpointed Hebrew words, where you have the consonants, and, according as you know the language, put in the vowels. Ellipsis reigns supreme: prepositions and relatives are dispensed with: nominatives and accusatives play hide and seek round verbs: we get lost in the maze of transpositions,

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and stumble over irritating and obscure parentheses. And then the illustrations and allusions! Sismondi and Milman will give us the history of the time, not quite the same as Mr. Browning's, but something like: the only thing that does not seem arbitrary is the geography. But Mr. Browning is a wide reader, and draws his illustrative materials from sources locked and sealed to us outsiders. How many of us—we feel ourselves in asking the question, to be the "Naddo," the typical critic, on whom Mr. Browning pours such persistent and varied scorn,—but still, how many of us know "Pentapoli of the naked arm?" Why is Cunizza's sphere the "Swooning sphere?" Why is Cunizza called Palma? Who is Dularete, and what is "Saponian strength?" Why is Fomalhaut chosen out of all the stars—a star of the Southern Hemisphere—to be, in the language of a twelfth century lady, the type of a luminous orb? What is the interpretation of the following passages?

"Nature's strict embrace,
Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest,
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted
lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure: how the tint loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud!"

"Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and
frail,
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail.
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
—Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree."

And if dictionaries help us to names, the names have to serve in a novel history. Alcamo and Nina are names connected with early Italian poetry in Sicily; but Nina the poetess, in Crescimbeni and Sismondi, becomes Nina the poet in Mr. Browning. Ovid will tell us some-

thing of Cydippe, but her old lover Acontius is changed into Agathon. And then the words:—"ginglingly," and "writhled," and "bloom-flinders," and "fastuous," and "mollitious," and many more, some no doubt picked out of local usage, but still to outsiders needing a glossary. Is it astonishing if, after wandering blindfold through what seems at first a hopeless labyrinth, some impatient reader should treat 'Sordello' as the Italian in Giordano Bruno's story treated his "enigmatic prophet"—"*Fratello, tu non vuoi esser inteso: io non ti voglio intendere—vai con cento diavoli*"—and kicked it, with an indignant malediction, into the dust-heap.

What is there to save 'Sordello' from the fate justly due to a *σκοτεινὸν ποίημα*, like Lycophron's 'Cassandra'? It is quite certain that nothing can be done with it, nothing can be made of it, without great attention and some trouble—more trouble than we usually expect to be called upon to give to any book but one of high mathematics. Is it worth while to take this trouble?

That depends. If we want the pleasant and perfectly legitimate excitement of a dramatic story, with clearly drawn characters and the interest of a well developed plan, we had better keep our time for books where its employment will be more fully rewarded. If there is amusement to be found in 'Sordello,' it is the amusement of finding out puzzles. But if we are people of a tolerant disposition—if we have realised how we all have our own ways of doing things, and then go on to reflect that a strong and deep and eager mind is very likely to have fits of self-will, and the quaint and perhaps unjustifiable habit of taking its own line in the teeth of what is accepted and usual, we may be tempted, by the obvious signs of the poet's being in earnest, and thinking that he has something worth telling to tell us, into a more patient and inquiring frame of mind. And if we begin to inquire, it is possible that we may find—find something worth our trouble.

The reading of 'Sordello' is likely to be accompanied, even to the end, by a plentiful running commentary of notes of interrogation, and marks and sounds of even more energetic feeling. But it will be surprising if we do not find a meaning, and a meaning worth writing an elaborate poem for.

Who was Sordello, and what makes Mr. Browning choose him for a subject? Sordello's name would be a forgotten one, with those of other troubadours of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but that Dante has chosen that he shall never be forgotten. He was plainly a distinguished person in his time, a cunning craftsman in the choice and use of language; but, if this was all, his name would only rank with a number of others, famous in their time, lost under the cloud of greater successors. He may have been something more than a writer or speaker: he may have been a ruler, though that is doubtful. But we know him, because in the antechamber of Purgatory he was so much to Dante. Through three cantos he is the companion and guide of the two great pilgrims. He is shown to us, as it were, in picture—his solitariness, his lofty port, his melancholy majesty—

"L'ombra tutta in se romita." . . .

"Ella non ci diceva alcuna cosa,
Ma lasciavane gir, solo guardando,
A guisa di leon quando si posa."

His presence calls forth some of Dante's deepest and most memorable laments over the miseries of Italy, and the responsibilities of her indolent and incapable rulers. He leads his companions to the secret and guarded valley where kings and princes of the earth, who have meant to do their duty, but in the end have not fulfilled their trust, must wait outside of Purgatory the hour of mercy; where Dante sees their still sadness, and learns their names, and hears their evening hymns. And here we learn Dante's judgment on Sordello himself: he is placed by himself, more self-centred and in guise haughtier than even the rulers and judges in whose

company he waits to begin his cleansing; and he is placed among those who had great opportunities and great thoughts—the men of great chances and great failures.

The filling up the story of Sordello is plainly suggested by the fact—we do not say the history, or the character, but the fact and existence—of such a creation of human experience and human purpose as Dante's poem. Dante, the singer, the artist, who could see in the world about him what none other saw, but wielded the spell to make others see what he saw, seemed naturally to belong to that vast and often magnificent company, from Orpheus and Homer downwards, whose business in life seemed art and the perfection of art. Let the world go as it would, let men quarrel and change and suffer as they might, the artist was outside it all: he worked apart, using, it may be, the materials given him by active life; but imagining, inventing, composing, painting, carving, building, singing, because that was his end and calling in life. He told on actual life according to his power, but he did not seek to tell on it. Virgil sang of Rome indeed, but it was the ideal Rome which he imagined. But Dante, with his artist's eye and artist's strength, was from the beginning, and continued to the end, in the closest contact with the most absorbing interests of human life. His course was shaped by two master influences: for himself, passionate and enduring love: for society, the enthusiasm for righteous government. And these, in a way never known in the world before, were taken up into the poet's nature, combined and fused with it and with each other in indestructible union, and moulded into a character in which we almost forget the poet, and such a poet, in the man. The poet-lover of course was no new thing. The poet-prophet, speaking of truth and sin and doom, had made his voice heard in the cities of Israel, had spoken in solemn tones in the choruses of Greek tragedy. In Dante—a youth dreamed through in the sweetest of Italian homes: a man-

hood spent in effort, in struggle, in defeat, with keen and fierce and unsparing rivals, in the most stirring and revolutionary of Italian commonwealths: an old age dragged through in wandering and hopeless exile, learning all the shapes and secrets of weakness, of wickedness, of pain to be found in that wild scene which Christendom then presented—in Dante, all this made up the man who saw, and who wrote, the *Divina Commedia*. It was no mere magnificent literary production of imaginative genius. It was as real as the man. His life-blood was in it, and with it all that he had seen and felt of the awful and mysterious lot of men: the splendid achievement, the irretrievable fall, the unspeakable prize: the pangs of Francesca and Ugolino, the solemn scene of preparation and self-discipline, the everlasting chant of the Mystic Rose.

The influences which acted on Dante are, in the story, represented as acting on Sordello. Sordello is the child of the same time—the time of awakening perception and longing for the beautiful: the time of awakening power in language and imaginative composition: the time of moral and social anarchy in the cities of Italy, anarchy which neither the Pope nor the Emperor, the supreme representatives of religion and law, could restrain, which they and their factions helped to make more hopeless and more cruel. The idea of a common good, a common government, was still recognised in the municipal order of the cities of Lombardy. The framework and outward form of their institutions were still popular; but from the closer intermeddling of the German Emperor with their affairs, the "tyrant" made his appearance earlier in them than in the Tuscan cities. No such catastrophe had overtaken the cities of the Arno and the Tiber as the destruction of Milan by Barbarossa. No such incredible and fiendish cruelty had tormented the southern cities as Padua and the cities of the March endured from Ecelin da Romano. This is the world in which Sordello's lot is cast, as

Dante's was at Florence: a world more terrible in crime, more terrible in suffering than the worst times then at Florence: a world without the nobler instincts, traditions, aspirations which at Florence were interwoven with the selfishness and bitterness of factious strife, and kept up the ideal and the hope of free citizenship, true justice, and generous patriotism in the famous Tuscan republic. The story, Mr. Browning informs us, is to set before us, with historical scenery more or less accurate but not necessary to its unfolding, the "development of a soul," in its ideal growth, choice, and fate. As Florence to Dante, so Mantua to Sordello, but only in vague analogy. Sordello went through changes, temptations, sufferings: his aim in life altered, enlarged, absorbed him. But the progress from love and from art, to great public thoughts and wonderful achievements for mankind, which Dante accomplished, Sordello failed in. This, in its various movements and scenes, is the story. Sordello is meant to interest if not attract us. There is beauty, there is nobleness, there is truthfulness, there is resistance to temptation. But so it was: he mistook the road, tried after it in earnest but missed it, and died.

Mr. Browning has his own way of setting all this before us—abrupt, dislocated, interrupted, incomplete, allusive, broken into by long monologues or meditations. Further, he tells the story, if we may say so, in his shirt-sleeves—with the most pronounced and avowed contempt for mere proprieties as well as for solemnities and pomps: without pretending to help us if we are too slow to catch his humour, or his deep, shy conviction, or his outbursts of amusement: without mercy for us, if we are shocked at the near neighbourhood of the grotesque and the pathetic, the loftiest with the most repulsive and even broad. Is it too much to say that there is sometimes a spirit of mischief in him, and he seems not unwilling to throw us off the trail, or to tempt us into dark places without outlet,

leaving us to make out our whereabouts? Lastly, he takes real men and women, who are known to have lived and acted at a certain time—Sordello, and Ecelin the Monk and his ferocious sons, the younger Ecelin and Alberic, and Cunizza his famous daughter—only Mr. Browning chooses that her name is her sister's, Palma¹—and Ecelin's terrible soldier, Taurello Salinguerra, and Ecelin's weird wife Adelaide, who reads the stars, and Azzo of Este, and Richard, Count of Saint Boniface—all only too really actors in a dark and miserable time, of whose doings we may read authentic records in Italian chronicles and annals; but, having taken them and their deeds, he transports them all to his own stage of imagination, and sees them only then as he chooses to think of them and to make them think and speak and do. He does what was a common practice at a certain period of classical literature, and to which our critical days have given, often very unjustly, the name of intentional forgery: the practice of taking up famous or well-known names into the sphere of imagination, and making them speak as it is thought they ought to speak—making them speak what is believed to be true in the spirit though feigned in the letter, like the speeches of generals and statesmen in Thucydides or Livy. Mr. Browning takes great liberties: much greater than our historical dramatists and novelists, when they present a Richard the Second or a Savonarola, perhaps no more than Dante has taken with some of his great names, perhaps with his Sordello and his Cunizza. Sordello, like Hamlet, comes from the poet's "inner consciousness:" the scraps that we do possess about him—Dante's magnificent picture in Purgatory, the scant notices collected in Troubadour histories, or the fuller but more mythical accounts, like Platina's, Mr. Browning haughtily passes by. He has a Sordello of his own, utterly unlike anything written of him elsewhere, and of him he knows

¹ See a list of the family in Rolandinus, iii. 171 (Muratori, vol. viii.)

the innermost secret and struggles of his soul; and it is his story, from his birth to his grave, with all its individual features and critical incidents, with his aspirations, and vicissitudes, that he will tell us if we have patience to listen.

But for Dante—so we are to understand—the Sordello of Mr. Browning's imagination would have lived through the ages. Dante is the first of the great poets of the world who wrote with an idea and an end beyond his art itself, equal in its greatness to the compass of man's whole nature; for Lucretius wrote but for a philosophy, Lucan for a political regret. But such an effort was, sooner or later, in the necessity of things, as time, and time marked by the appearance of Christianity, went on. So Mr. Browning imagines that first effort coming before it was adequately fulfilled: it came in the imaginary Sordello, who represents a tendency, who is Dante's forerunner and herald star, because such an attempt must have been stirring in nobler souls, over and above the mere love and craft of poetry, as shown in the imaginary Eglamor, the representative of the Cinos and Guidos of Dante's time, the predecessors of Petrarch. Sordello is supposed to be much more than the Troubadour known to history. His was the history of a great purpose, though a defeated one. "Gate-vein" of the "heart's blood" of truth and love and mercy "to Lombardy," he was "thy forerunner, Florentine." But Dante absorbed him, "a herald star,"

"Relentless into thy consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song.
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God."

But its brightness is not quenched or lost: it is "blent" for ever with Dante's splendours; but,

"Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, discentwine
That undercurrent soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass,
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixed
with glass
In John's transcendent vision,"

and tell the story of Sordello, exhibit the "lustre" of his star by itself?

So it pleases the poet to say, for only he knows it. But why—for he does not tell—is this star called, "Serenest of the progeny of God?" Why, "His darling?" We ask, because not even in that realm where the poet disposes all things can we find the reason: unless it be, that Sordello, like Francis, opened his heart to the cries of the poor crowds. Here is an instance of what Mr. Browning asks from us. Is it part of our trial and discipline as his scholars, that we should read, and not know why? Or else, are we mere blind and commonplace critics, such as the personage who plays a prominent part in the poem, the *Jongleur*, Naddo?

The first portion of the story describes the development of a rich and ambitious poetic nature, its triumphs and failures, its struggles to make its art minister to its pride and selfishness, its profound disappointment and despair, its opening into new life under the inspiration of love—a love fuller and nobler than his own boyish fancy for Palma—Palma's love for him, kindled by her belief in the depth and greatness of his soul, and her longing to live under its power and to behold achievements worthy of it in the world of men and of effort. What shall those achievements be? Then comes a long interlude on the poet's own account. It is an apology—a disclosure for himself—an apology in the guise of banter and skit for letting his own life and soul and purpose appear under the fractures and shortcoming of his poem: a disclosure, a shy, a half-recalled disclosure, of what in his secret heart he has learned is the only object man ought to live for, the one supreme queen and mistress, eclipsing all other charms and temptations, to whom all passion and all homage by right are due—mankind, in all its mixed glory, in its misery and degradation and pathetic silence and patience, in its poorness and meanness and hopeless suffering, in its endless, immense eternal

appeal for pity. The poor, blind, dumb multitudes of mankind whom no man can number, unknown, unheeded, helpless, and without hope, "Earth's immense and trampled multitude," whose troubles, whose sins are beyond all reach—the "sheep having no shepherd" to Divine love, the "many-headed beast" to human scorn—take a poetic shape, battered, worn, with traces of happier possibilities—appeal infinitely to justice, compassion, sympathy, chivalrous manliness and patience, become an object for devotion and passionate enthusiasm:

"Care-bit, erased,
Broken up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely; and I love you more, far more,
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-
floor.
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and
where
A whisper came, 'Let others seek!—thy care
Is found, thy life's provision: if thy race
Should be thy mistress, and into one face
The many faces crowd.'"

This mistress his heart goes out to, as Francis longs for and espouses poverty. This great interest is alone worth a strong man's strength and love. "It is pleasant to be young," to watch the bright girls in the fruit-boats and under the bridges at Venice; but there rises at his side the vision of the human race—"sad, dishevelled ghost"—and it lays a commanding claim on his devotion, paramount to all other. It is for her—under the stress of that high truth, that on the greatest of men, thinker, maker, actor, comes all the greater the imperious demand for his self-dedication to his race, in the ignorance, the wretchedness, the evil, in which it needs his help—that the story of Sordello is continued. What is it but the great truth, that every great life is the echo, strong or faint, of the One great Life of Love, that came to seek and to save that which was lost?

The second portion of the story tells the opening of new thoughts and a new life to Sordello, under the influence of Palma. She has taught him that life needs a worthy object. He opens his eyes and sees, in palpable,

individual proof, the miseries of his fellows. But how to remedy it? The great spell of the Middle Ages, the name of Rome, acts upon him. He learns its emptiness. Great factions divide society all round him, with great pretensions, and with great and equal and monstrous crimes. He learns who he is—the long-lost son of the mighty warrior who seems to hold the fate of Italy for a moment in his hands. Salinguerra would gladly make him head of a power which should crush all the petty tyrannies, and be able to defy Pope and Emperor. But that would be only to continue the reign of force, of wrong, of blood, which has made the earth so miserable for the crowds to whom his life is due. Sordello will have none of that. What is there to do? Mr. Browning does not tell us. Perhaps he might have used Salinguerra's offer, and used it in a new way: perhaps, have been a leader of mankind. Should he, or Ecelin, grasp the place and power of the House of Romano, and be supreme in North Italy? But Sordello dies, and no work is done: nothing is left behind him but a mythical name. The power of Romano passes into the hands of the merciless Ecelin; and Salinguerra—who, we may say in passing, is the one clearly and strongly painted character in the poem; the powerful, unscrupulous, but not unkindly soldier; magnanimous, touchingly honest in his loyalty and content with the second place, smiling, or "immeasurably yawning" at Sordello's transcendental doctrines and long harangues—Salinguerra ends his career, as Italian warriors often did, in the prisons of the jealous police of order-keeping Venice. It was left to a greater soul to find the way which Sordello had failed in, to benefit his fellows, to do something for mankind. But the teller of his story asks our kind thoughts for him, for the sake of what he died in striving after.

The working out of the first part is comparatively without difficulty. The picture of Sordello's solitary boyhood, passed in a lonely castle and its sur-

rounding woods, near Mantua, an orphan page to an evil and mysterious mistress, with no one to play with and no one to love, left to himself, with nature and what there was in his weird home of art, self-centred, self-pleasing, gradually unfolding his strong, imaginative nature—like a tree gradually bursting out in spring—suggests a contrast with the city life of the boy described in the 'Vita Nuova.' In spite of all perplexities of allusion or construction, it is a charming picture; but it is as the richness and strangeness of Giorgione to the pure simplicity of line and tint in the Umbrians.

"You can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air
Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life; and day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose."

The unfathomable doctrine of election is stamped upon all nature; and Sordello is one of the elect. The lonely child works its imaginative will on its companions of nature, tree, and flower, and bird, and insect: creates its own wonderful world and its conditions, alters, transforms, tyrannises over it. The boy hears distant sounds of the great human drama, far from him, which he never sees; but he makes one for himself, with names, and persons, and histories: he fights and conquers and rewards and punishes, a despot above law and fear; and he has, too, glimpses of beauty—only glimpses of living beauty—the Palma of his future life; but he can give a life of his own to the beauty of marble in one of the chambers which he haunts.

"A vault, see; thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—
A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group
Round it,—each side of it, where'er one sees—
Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides

Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilyed flesh
 Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
 First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
 The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids half
 closed ;

Some, with meek arms behind their backs dis-
 posed,

Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to
 veil

Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so
 pale,

Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
 Like priestesses because of sin impure
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the
 dregs.

And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-
 chinks,

Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden
 shrinks

And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the
 stain

Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?
 Then with a step more light, a heart more
 large,

He may depart, leave her and every one
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'Tis the tale I mean
 To tell you."

So, unknown to himself, he develops
 power—power within himself to see,
 to create, to combine, to colour, for
 his own delight : he is his own singer,
 inexhaustible, untired, and he is his
 own audience. And out of this life,
 left all to itself, as the wild flower
 from its chance seed in kindly ground,
 Sordello grows to be a true poet ; and
 discovers it to himself and to others, in
 a Troubadour contest with the minstrel
 Eglamor—the mind of real insight
 and genuine imagination matched
 against practised but artificial talent.

But there are two classes of souls
 dowered with the great poetic gift,
 made to see and feel all that is great
 and beautiful, and to open the eyes of
 men to see and feel it too. Both have,
 it may be, in equal measure, that quick
 sense to which, as the days and years

pass, is revealed in marvellous abun-
 dance, the mystery and loveliness of
 the world.

"Fresh births of beauty wake
 Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
 With every mode of loveliness : then cast
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
 Before a coming glory. Up and down
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
 To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—
 And the sealed eyeball owns the mystic rod ;
 Visibly through his garden walketh God.
 So fare they. Now revert. One character
 Denotes them through the progress and the
 stir,—

A need to blend with each external charm,
 Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and
 warm,—

In something not themselves ; they would
 belong
 To what they worship—stronger and more
 strong

Thus prodigally fed—which gathers shape
 And feature, soon imprisons past escape
 The votary framed to love and to submit
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
 A legend ; light had birth ere moons and suns,
 Flowing through space a river and alone,
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were
 strown

Hither and thither, foundering and blind :
 When into each of them rushed light—to find
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
 Let such forego their just inheritance !
 For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
 Proclaims each new revelation born a twin
 With a distinctest consciousness within
 Referring still the quality, now first
 Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct
 nursed

In silence, now remembered better, shown
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own ;
 A dream come true ; the special exercise
 Of any special function that implies
 The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
 Dormant within their nature all along—
 Whose fault ? So homage, other souls direct
 Without, turns inward."

To which of these does Sordello be-
 long ? Alas ! his child's life, his boy's
 life, has given him nothing to love,
 nothing to care for but himself : his
 gift has only created realms to do him
 homage : it has made him his own idol,
 whose claims are absolute and limit-
 less. Except the thrill at Palma's
 beauty, there is nothing outside
 him, to sway him, to claim duty and
 service. He finds himself a poet,
 saluted as such by the pathetic recog-
 nition of his defeated and broken-

hearted rival, crowned by the hand of Palma herself. He is spell-bound, fascinated by the amazement of unimagined success. A career of intoxicating triumph and fame is before him. He is the favourite of Mantua, applauded, criticised, envied. Strength grows within him, and new and varied demands task it; and the longing grows, too, for larger recognition, for more unqualified and exclusive worship. And Apollo has no reason to complain that his altars want incense—"tantus eloquentie vir existens non solum in poetando, sed quomodolibet loquendo," is the judgment handed down by his great successor. He has all he imagined: all he thought due to him. His "desire" is given him; and with it "leanness sent into his soul." The worship asked for to himself ends in satiety, listlessness, despair. After all, he finds that he does not do his best. His conscience, as one who thinks and knows, reproaches him. He knows that there is something truer and deeper in him, than what he has to put forth on the spur of the moment, to keep his character with judges whom he sees through and despises.

"Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they
cared
For his perplexity. . . .

Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by
guess.

Only obliged to ask himself, 'What was?'
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period:

The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more: why move his soul, since move it
must

At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 't was spoken."

The great dream, that the world was to
put its seal on his hungry self-worship,
ends in blank disappointment. All
this is worked out into the details

of a distinct story, with its incidents, scenery, vicissitudes, as if they had come from a chronicle—with its exhibitions of character, feeling, mental activity, as a dramatist interprets and imagines them. Much of this continued illustration of the course and changes of such a soul as Sordello is supposed to be, is, as it could not fail to be for a poet like Mr. Browning, powerful, subtle, and original. In some parts, it is not easy to follow his meaning: in some, we certainly need an explanatory note. But on the whole, what Sordello's strength and weakness are, what he wants and longs for, where he seeks his happiness and why he misses it, are perfectly intelligible. It is no recondite story. He who turns round God's gifts to his own self-worship will lose what they were meant to bring him, and will find his self-worship a cheat and a delusion.

But the second part is less intelligible. Sordello rises to a higher ideal of life. How this comes about through Palma's influence is told us, but does not appear as clearly as might be wished. But it does come about. He learns that life is not for mere amusement, or pleasure, or glory, or even resigned disappointment; but that to satisfy the standard which he cannot but acknowledge, he must look at the world as it is, not as he may choose to imagine it: he must recognise that he is part of a great brotherhood, a great suffering brotherhood: that he owes it infinite obligations of patient sympathy, duty, help; and that only a life led under the consciousness of these obligations can satisfy him and make him happy. Imagination, the poet's gift, even more than sight, has made him understand this: it is a gift for which he is responsible. But the story passes on in Mr. Browning's hands into a pathetic tragedy. Sordello sees his mission, but somehow fails to fulfil it: resists the temptation that would divert him from it, resists it in its gross sense, and yet does not see to what account the occasion might be turned. The talent, one or five, is not put to wrong use, but is not used, because

he fails to find, though he wishes, how to help mankind. This is his fault; and so, because "what he should have been, could be, and was not"—because he missed something which "he wished should go to him, not he to it"—therefore Dante justly finds him, not among the lost, but among the greatly negligent, almost the "slothful servant," "*servus piger*;" among the well-intentioned leaders of mankind who had trifled over their tasks. Dante did that which bound him for ever to his fellows: which made all Italians henceforth brethren: which gave eyes to see to all generations of mankind: which lifted their souls from the sin and soil of time to the eternal light. Sordello has remained a name—a name added to a few ballads.

But what Mr. Browning's telling does not make plain is, wherein was the failure. Doubtless, he is beaten by his half-heartedness: he is, and he knows he is, too weak for a great work. But where and how does this show itself? What is it that he ought to have done, might have done, and did not? His temptation, it would seem, was when, after Salinguerra had recognised him as his long-lost son, after he had listened, first with amusement and then with impatient scorn, to Sordello's pleadings for the poor and miserable multitudes, and finally had been cowed and overawed by Sordello's gathering earnestness and passion, Salinguerra had offered him the armed leadership of Lombardy, perhaps of Italy. There it was for him to take, if he would. But to take it, was to take it with its small chances of justice and mercy, with all its certainties—witness Salinguerra himself—of violence and cruelty: it was to continue that which had appalled his soul with its ghastly terrors. That, surely, was not what he was called to; and he resisted the temptation. But he had only strength to refuse it, and no more: he had not heart or will to see what it led to; and refusing it, in Mr. Browning's story, he dies: his work left undone

in despair, his divine work unfinished, while the poor hermit-bee, which had been working all the day, was able to accomplish what God had given it to do.

By this, the hermit-bee has stopped His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit, Twirled so, and filed all day: *the mansion's fit God counselled for*. As easy guess the word That passed betwixt them, and become the third

To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks Of the stone maidens and the font of stone He, creeping through the crevice leaves alone. Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom Anon they laid within that old font tomb, And, yet again, alas."

But then, what had he to do? Was he too late for everything? Was it the Nemesis of power wasted long ago? Was the opportunity gone for being among the masters of thought, or the masters of action, or the masters, like St. Francis, of sympathy? Could he have made a nobler use of what Salinguerra offered, for the real good of Italy, and had he not the heart? Or, is his death, which is told with such strange reticence, meant to leave us in darkness, with the suggestion that love may accomplish in another life what a poor fellow-mortal failed to accomplish here?

"Che cima di giudizio non s'avvalla,
Perchè foco d'amor compia in un punto,
Ciò che dee satisfar chi qui si stalla."

Sordello, it must always be remembered, has wasted half his life, and, as he says, Nature does not give a second life to mend the first. The man who has dawdled away his first years of power in what is frivolous and selfish, cannot start on the same level with the man who from the first has been in earnest. When, at last, Sordello comes to be in earnest, he has already lost much of his time of preparation for a true life's work. He has missed his chance of knowing its true conditions. So in his very earnestness he is continually jarring against these conditions. He sees great things done in the world—Rome, for instance, or human civilisation—and he wants to do great things. But he mistakes the

way they are done—not all at once, not by some great stroke, but as nature develops the tree, or as the coral-reef is built up. "A man can do but a man's portion, the last of each series of workmen."

"And then a low voice wound into his heart :
'Sordello!' (Low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error—one mistake
Of her past oracle) 'Sordello, wake!
God has conceded two sights to a man—
One, of men's whole work, Time's completed plan,
The other, of the minute's work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness : what's dispersed
Save hope of that supreme step which, deserted
Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
Only to give you heart to take your own
Step, and there stay—leaving the rest alone?
Where is the vanity? Why count as one
The first step, with the last step? What
is gone
Except Rome's æry magnificence,
That last step you'd take first—an evidence
You were God: be man now! Let those
glances fall!
The basis, the beginning step of all,
Which proves you just a man—is that gone
too?
Pity to disconcert one versed as you
In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
Read the black writing—that collective man
Outstrips the individual! Who began
The acknowledged greatness? Ay, your
own art
Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart—
Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
Alcamos's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
Woven into the echoes left erewhile
By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and
o'er!
An elder poet in the younger's place;
Nina's the strength, but Alcamos's the grace:
Each neutralizes each then! Search your
fill;
You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night
Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting
light
Of a forgotten yesterday.'

"The 'multitude' of his imagination is a very different thing from the concrete multitudes whose various items meet him: the ideal Rome falls to pieces in the presence of the real Rome; and he has not power to harmonise the two. How should he help the great 'cause,' not of Guelf or

Ghibellin, but of mankind? He might help it by his gift as a poet—he might help it by hand and action. Should he trust his great gift of access to the souls of men? Should he throw heart and life into its exercise? or should he take the judge's badge, the soldier's sceptre, and rival Charlemagne and Hildebrand? Ah, there is no time now for the first: he saw through the temptation of the last, and refused to 'oppress the world.' He sees no other way. And so he failed.

"Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never
dumb
In praise of him: while what he should
have been,
Could be, and was not—the one step too
mean
For him to take,—we suffer at this day
Because of: Eeelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's
sake:
He did much—but Sordello's chance was
gone.
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed—*'twas a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it*
—As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he
dozed
Really at home—one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not
worth
Doing, so spared from doing them hence-
forth—
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to
boot
*All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all!*"

There is a subtle Scotch proverb, "God reason and part cause." There was "good reason" why he should shrink from taking the place which Salinguerra wanted him to take, and this was "part cause" why he did nothing more. But it was only "part cause": the rest of the "cause" was his disinclination to think out something better and more troublesome. He failed, because wishes and will are

not the same. He who began with requiring everything to bow to his will, ended by being unable to will the thing he would. He can save himself from being what he ought not to be—what Salinguerra would have made him, the heir of the power of the house of Romano and of its selfishness and violence: further, the supplanter of the rightful heirs, whom Salinguerra proposed to betray—that step was “too mean for him to take;” though it would have been better for the world if he had taken it, and kept out Ecelin and Alberic. But he did nothing more. They proved

“Wherever’s will

To do, there’s plenty to be done, or ill
Or good.”

He would not do the ill, but cared not to do the good from

“His strange disbelief that aught was ever
to be done.”

If the good had come to him of itself he would gladly have taken it. But he had not the will to imagine it, to seek it; and so his noble and beautiful nature, with all its grand possibilities, sank into uselessness and into forgetfulness.

Failed, as so many have failed, as so few have not failed. But, as Mr. Browning teaches us, there are different kinds of failure. That there may be earthly falling short and imperfection, which is much greater and more hopeful than great earthly achievement, is, indeed, one of his deepest convictions and favourite lessons. It is developed with great power, and greater clearness than here, in ‘Paracelsus’: growing out of the strange mixture, in the highest natures, of limitation and hope—hope boundless, limitations impassable, puzzling, humbling. Besides failures which seem absolute and final, there are failures that carry away with them noble qualities and capacities full of promise, though they have been beaten here—failures which are greater even in disaster than the smooth perfect successes with which so many are content. Is not something to

be put to the limitations of our short, mortal life? to the disparate conditions of soul and body—an eternal soul with a body of time, bringing what belongs to the eternal into the mould of the temporary, and bursting the vessel too weak to receive it?

“Now, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions; take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
Tied to that body’s purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body’s trade
More than the body’s self—had fain conveyed
Her boundless, to the body’s bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not,—
Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,—
The soul must needs instruct her weak com-
peer,

Run o’er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,
The minute gone, the body’s power let go
Apportioned to that joy’s acquirement! Broke
Morning o’er earth, he yearned for all it woke—
From the volcano’s vapour-flag, winds hoist
Black o’er the spread of sea,—down to the
moist

Dale’s silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul’s absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning’s cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford,—
The chord’s might half-discovered, what should
pluck
One string, his finger, was found palsy-
struck.”

So, while he sorrowfully throws up his Sordello’s earthly conquests, his attempt to bind himself to his kind and do some great thing for it, his life wasted by half-heartedness and self-pleasing, he does not part without hope for his gentleness, his quick sympathies, his readiness to let in the love of his fellows, his nobler ideals, his refusal to exchange them for lower ones. Sordello falls short of the heroic, of the saintly, of that perfection which in its own conscious imperfection rises higher and higher after the divine and the unattainable. He falls short of this as much as he is above the narrow completeness represented by Eglamor, which accomplishes what it aims at because it aims but low; which is not troubled, distracted, hindered by the mystery of wider and deeper thoughts; which may be simple and sincere and

contented in its limitations and lowliness ; which may be stupid and ignorant self-satisfaction, but which at any rate is incapable of the troubles and the hopes of greatness. Sordello, like so many of us, is between the two. He has not made much of things here, though he had the eye to see and the soul to aspire. But may there not be a future for him still? For did not Dante meet with Sordello at the foot of the steep of the Mount of Cleansing—having, it may be, long to wait, but still there, where no more change could harm him—waiting amid "majestic pains," as after such an experience he might well wait—in still, stern communion with himself till his time should come?

The following lines seem to sum up the main drift of 'Sordello.' They are clouded by a terrible and inexcusable obscurity of language, allusion, and undisentangled thought. Yet they present in dim and imperfect outline a great and profound idea, struggling to disclose itself. In their force, and in their defects—in what they do, and in what they do not effect they are characteristic of the whole attempt.

"So much was plain then, proper in the past :
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
"Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds, perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed?—nay, might have been
and would,

Each purpose ordered right—the soul's no whit

Beyond the body's purpose under it—
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die—would soul, proportioned thus, begin

Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes

To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere—and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good

And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood

To follow? Never may some soul see All
—The Great Before and After, and the Small

Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
And take the single course prescribed before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?

But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,

Nature has plied with all her means, from trees

And flowers e'en to the Multitude! and these,

Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriended
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still

Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man—
What need! And of—none the minutest duct

To that out-nature, nought that would instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live—
But of a power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose and this last revealed—

This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
What utter need!"

R. W. CHURCH.

MR. PULVERTOFT'S EQUESTRIAN EXPERIENCES.

It was on the way to Sandown Park that I met him first, on that horribly wet July afternoon when Bendigo won the Eclipse Stakes. He sat opposite to me in the train going down, and my attention was first attracted to him by the marked contrast between his appearance and his attire: he had not thought fit to adopt the regulation costume for such occasions, and I think I never saw a man who had made himself more aggressively horsey. The mark of the beast was sprinkled over his linen: he wore snaffle sleeve-links, a hard hunting-hat, a Newmarket coat, and extremely tight trousers. And with all this, he fell as far short of the genuine sportsman as any actor who ever wore his spurs upside down in a hunting-chorus. His expression was mild and inoffensive, and his watery pale eyes and receding chin gave one the idea that he was hardly to be trusted astride anything more spirited than a gold-headed cane. And yet, somehow, he aroused compassion rather than any sense of the ludicrous: he had that look of shrinking self-effacement which comes of a recent humiliation, and, in spite of all extravagances, he was obviously a gentleman; while something in his manner indicated that his natural tendency would, once at all events, have been to avoid any kind of extremes.

He puzzled and interested me so much that I did my best to enter into conversation with him, only to be baffled by the jerky embarrassment with which he met all advances, and when we got out at Esher, curiosity led me to keep him still in view.

Evidently he had not come with any intention of making money. He avoided the grand stand, with the bookmakers huddling in couples, like hoarse love-birds: he kept away from the mem-

bers' inclosure, where the Guards' band was endeavouring to defy the elements which emptied their vials into the brazen instruments: he drifted listlessly about the course till the clearing-bell rang, and it seemed as if he was searching for some one whom he only wished to discover in order to avoid.

Sandown Park, it must be admitted, was not as gay as usual that day, with its "deluged park" and "unsummer'd sky," its waterproofed toilettes and massed umbrellas, whose sides gleamed livid as they caught the light—but there was a general determination to ignore the unseasonable dampness as far as possible, and an excitement over the main event of the day which no downpour could quench.

The Ten Thousand was run: ladies with marvellously confected bonnets lowered their umbrellas without a murmur, and smart men on drags shook hands effusively as, amidst a frantic roar of delight, Bendigo strode past the post. The moment after, I looked round for my incongruous stranger, and saw him engaged in a well-meant attempt to press a currant bun upon a carriage horse tethered to one of the trees—a feat of abstraction which, at such a time, was only surpassed by that of Archimedes at the sack of Syracuse.

After that I could no longer control my curiosity—I felt I must speak to him again, and I made an opportunity later, as we stood alone on a stand which commanded the finish of one of the shorter courses, by suggesting that he should share my umbrella.

Before accepting he glanced suspiciously at me through the rills that streamed from his unprotected hat-brim. "I'm afraid," I said, "it is rather like shutting the stable-door after the steed is stolen."

He started. "He *was* stolen, then," he cried; "so you have heard?"

I explained that I had only used an old proverb which I thought might appeal to him, and he sighed heavily: "I was misled for the moment," he said: "you have guessed then that I have been accustomed to horses?"

"You have hardly made any great secret of it."

"The fact is," he said, instantly understanding this allusion to his costume, "I—I put on these things so as not to lose the habit of riding altogether—I have not been on horse-back lately. At one time I used to ride constantly—constantly. I was a regular attendant in Rotten Row—until something occurred which shook my nerves, and I am only waiting now for the shock to subside."

I did not like to ask any questions, and we walked back to the station, and travelled up to Waterloo in company, without any further reference to the subject.

As we were parting, however, he said, "I wonder if you would care to hear my full story some day? I cannot help thinking it would interest you, and it would be a relief to me."

I was ready enough to hear whatever he chose to tell me; and persuaded him to dine with me at my rooms that evening, and unbosom himself afterwards, which he did to an extent for which I confess I was unprepared.

That he himself implicitly believed in his own story, I could not doubt; and he told it throughout with the oddest mixture of vanity and modesty, and an obvious struggle between a dim perception of his own absurdity and the determination to spare himself in no single particular, which, though it did not overcome my scepticism, could not fail to enlist sympathy. But for all that, by the time he entered upon the more sensational part of his case, I was driven to form conclusions respecting it which, as they will probably force themselves upon the reader's own mind, I need not anticipate here.

I give the story, as far as possible, in the words of its author; and have only to add that it would never have been published here without his full consent and approval.

My name, said he, is Gustavus Pulvertoft. I have no occupation and six hundred a year. I lived a quiet and contented bachelor until I was twenty-eight, and then I met Diana Chetwynd for the first time. We were spending Christmas at the same country-house, and it did not take me long to become the most devoted of her many adorers. She was one of the most variously accomplished girls I had ever met. She was a skilled musician, a brilliant amateur actress: she could give most men thirty out of a hundred at billiards, and her judgment and daring across the most difficult country had won her the warm admiration of all hunting-men. And she was neither fast nor horsey, seeming to find but little pleasure in the society of mere sportsmen, to whose conversation she infinitely preferred that of persons who, like myself, were rather agreeable than athletic. I was not at that time, whatever I may be now, without my share of good looks, and for some reason it pleased Diana to show me a degree of favour which she accorded to no other member of the household.

It was annoying to feel that my unfamiliarity with the open-air sports in which she delighted debarred me from her company to so great an extent; for it often happened that I scarcely saw her until the evening, when I sometimes had the bliss of sitting next to her at dinner; but on these occasions I could not help seeing that she found some pleasure in my society.

I don't think I have mentioned that, besides being exquisitely lovely, Diana was an heiress, and it was not without a sense of my own presumption that I allowed myself to entertain the hope of winning her at some future day. Still, I was not absolutely penniless, and she was her own mistress, and I

had some cause, as I have said, for believing that she was, at least, not ill-disposed towards me. It seemed a favourable sign, for instance, when she asked me one day why it was I never rode. I replied that I had not ridden for years—though I did not add that the exact number of those years was twenty-eight.

"Oh, but you must take it up again!" she said, with the prettiest air of imperiousness. "You ought to ride in the Row next season."

"If I did," I said, "would you let me ride with you sometimes?"

"We should meet, of course," she said; "and it is such a pity not to keep up your riding—you lose so much by not doing so."

Was I wrong in taking this as an intimation that, by following her advice, I should not lose my reward? If you had seen her face as she spoke, you would have thought as I did then—as I do now.

And so, with this incentive, I overcame any private misgivings, and soon after my return to town attended a fashionable riding-school near Hyde Park, with the fixed determination to acquire the whole art and mystery of horsemanship.

That I found learning a pleasure I cannot conscientiously declare. I have passed happier hours than those I spent in cantering round four bare whitewashed walls on a snorting horse, with interdicted stirrups crossed upon the saddle. The riding-master informed me from time to time that I was getting on, and I knew instinctively when I was coming off; but I must have made some progress, for my instructor became more encouraging. "Why, when you come here first, Mr. Pulvertoft, sir, you were like a pair o' tongs on a wall, as they say; whereas now—well, you can tell yourself how you are," he would say, though, even then, I occasionally had reason to regret that I was *not* on a wall. However I persevered, inspired by the thought that each fresh horse I crossed (and some were very fresh)

represented one more barrier surmounted between myself and Diana, and encouraged by the discovery, after repeated experiments, that tan was rather soothing to fall upon than otherwise.

When I walked in the Row, where a few horsemen were performing as harbingers of spring, I criticised their riding, which I thought indifferent, as they neglected nearly all the rules. I began to anticipate a day when I should exhibit a purer and more classic style of equestrianism. And one morning I saw Diana, who pulled up her dancing little mare to ask me if I had remembered her advice, and I felt proudly able to reply that I should certainly make my appearance in the Row before very long.

From that day I was perpetually questioning my riding-master as to when he considered I should be ripe for Rotten Row—the word "ripe" suggests a fall, but I did not think of that then. He was dubious, but not actually dissuasive. "It's like this you see, sir," he explained, "if you get hold of a quiet, steady horse—why you won't come to no harm; but if you go out on an animal that will take advantage of you, Mr. Pulvertoft, why you'll be all no how on him, sir."

They would have mounted me at the school; but I knew most of the stud there, and none of them quite came up to my ideal of a "quiet, steady horse;" so I went to a neighbouring job-master, from whom I had occasionally hired a brougham, and asked to be shown an animal he could recommend to one who had not had much practice lately. He admitted candidly enough that most of his horses "took a deal of riding," but added that it so happened that he had one just then which would suit me "down to the ground"—a phrase which grated unpleasantly on my nerves, though I consented to see the horse. His aspect impressed me most favourably. He was a chestnut of noble proportions, with a hogged mane; but what reassured me was the expression of his

eye, indicating as it did a self-respect and sagacity which one would hardly expect for seven and sixpence an hour.

"You won't get a showier Park 'ack than what he is, not to be so quiet," said his owner. "He's what you may call a kind 'oss, and as gentle—you could ride him on a pack-thread."

I considered reins safer, but I was powerfully drawn towards the horse: he seemed to me to be sensible that he had a character to lose, and to possess too high an intelligence wilfully to forfeit his high testimonials. With hardly a second thought, I engaged him for the following afternoon.

I mounted at the stables, with just a passing qualm, perhaps, while my stirrup-leathers were being adjusted, and a little awkwardness in taking up my reins, which were more twisted than I could have wished; however, at length, I found myself embarked in the stream of traffic on the back of the chestnut—whose name, by the way, was Brutus.

Shall I ever forget the pride and ecstasy of finding that I had my steed under perfect control, that we threaded the maze of carriages with absolute security? I turned him into the Park, and clucked my tongue: he broke into a canter, and how shall I describe my delight at the discovery that it was not uncomfortable! I said "Woa," and he stopped, so gradually that my equilibrium was not seriously disturbed: he trotted, and still I accommodated myself to his movements without any positive inconvenience. I could have embraced him for gratitude: never before had I been upon a beast whose paces were so easy, whose behaviour was so considerate. I could ride at last! or, which amounted to the same thing, I could ride the horse I was on, and I would "use no other." I was about to meet Diana Chetwynd, and need not fear even to encounter her critical eyes.

We had crossed the Serpentine bridge, and were just turning in upon

the Ride, when—and here I am only too conscious that what I am about to say may strike you as almost incredible—when I heard an unfamiliar voice addressing me with, "I say—you!" and the moment afterwards realised that it proceeded from my own horse!

I am not ashamed to own that I was as nearly off as possible; for a more practised rider than I could pretend to be might have a difficulty in preserving his equanimity in this all but unparalleled situation. I was too much engaged in feeling for my left stirrup to make any reply, and presently the horse spoke once more. "I say," he inquired, and I failed to discern the slightest respect in his tone, "do you think you can ride?" You can judge for yourself how disconcerting the inquiry must have been from such lips: I felt rooted to the saddle—a sensation which, with me, was sufficiently rare. I looked round in helpless bewilderment, at the shimmering Serpentine, and the white houses in Park Lane gleaming out of a lilac haze, at the cocoa-coloured Row, and the flash of distant carriage-wheels in the sun-light: all looked as usual—and yet, there was I on the back of a horse which had just inquired "whether I thought I could ride!"

"I have had two dozen lessons at a riding-school," I said at last, with rather a flabby dignity.

"I should hardly have suspected it," was his brutal retort. "You are evidently one of the hopeless cases."

I was deeply hurt, the more so because I could not deny that he had some claim to be a judge. "I—I thought we were getting on so nicely together," I faltered, and all he said in reply to that was, "Did you?"

"Do you know," I began, striving to be conversational, "I never was on a horse that talked before."

"You are enough to make any horse talk," he answered, "but I suppose I *am* an exception."

"I think you must be," said I. "The only horses I ever heard of as

possessing the gift of speech were the Houyhnhnms."

"How do you know I am not one of them?" he replied.

"If you are, you will understand that I took the liberty of mounting you under a very pardonable mistake; and if you will have the goodness to stand still, I will no longer detain you."

"Not so fast," said he: "I want to know something more about you first. I should say now you were a man with plenty of oats."

"I am—well off," I said. How I wished I was!

"I have long been looking out for a proprietor who would not overwork me: now, of course, I don't know, but you scarcely strike me as a *hard rider*."

"I do not think I could be fairly accused of that," I answered, with all the consciousness of innocence.

"Just so—then buy me."

"No," I gasped: "after the extremely candid opinion you were good enough to express of my riding, I'm surprised that you should even suggest such a thing."

"Oh, I will put up with that—you will suit me well enough, I dare say."

"You must excuse me. I prefer to keep my spare cash for worthier objects; and, with your permission, I will spend the remainder of the afternoon on foot."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said he.

"If you won't stop, and let me get off properly," I said with firmness, "I shall *roll off*." There were some promenaders within easy hail; but how was I to word a call for help, how explain such a dilemma as mine?

"You will only reduce me to the painful necessity of rolling on you," he replied. "You must see that you are to a certain extent in my power. Suppose it occurred to me to leap those rails and take you into the Serpentine, or to run away and upset a mounted policeman with you—do you think you could offer much opposition?"

I could not honestly assert that I did. "You were introduced to me," I said reproachfully, "as a *kind horse*!"

"And so I am—apart from matters of business. Come, will you buy, or be bolted with? I hate indecision!"

"Buy!" I said, with commercial promptness. "If you will take me back, I will arrange about it at once."

It is needless to say that my one idea was to get safely off his back: after which, neither honour nor law could require me to execute a contract extorted from me by threats. But, as we were going down the mews, he said reflectively, "I've been thinking—it will be better for all parties, if you make your offer to my proprietor *before* you dismount." I was too vexed to speak: this animal's infernal intelligence had foreseen my manœuvre—he meant to foil it, if he could.

And then we clattered in under the glass-roofed yard of the livery stables; and the job-master, who was alone there, cast his eyes up at the sickly-faced clock, as if he were comparing its pallor with my own. "Why, you *are* home early, sir," he said. "You didn't find the 'orse too much for you, did you?" He said this without any suspicion of the real truth; and, indeed, I may say, once for all, that this weird horse—Houyhnhnm, or whatever else he might be—admitted no one but myself into the secret of his marvellous gifts, and in all his conversations with me, managed (though how, I cannot pretend to say) to avoid being overheard.

"Oh, dear no," I protested, "he carried me admirably—admirably!" and I made an attempt to slip off.

No such thing: Brutus instantly jogged my memory, and me, by the slightest suggestion of a "buck."

"He's a grand 'orse, sir, isn't he?" said the job-master complacently.

"Magnificent!" I agreed, with a jerk. "Will you go to his head, please?"

But the horse backed into the

centre of the yard, where he plunged with a quiet obstinacy. "I like him so much," I called out, as I clung to the saddle, "that I want to know if you're at all inclined to part with him?" Here Brutus became calm and attentive.

"Would you be inclined to make me an offer for him, sir?"

"Yes," I said faintly. "About how much would he be?"

"You step into my office here, sir," said he, "and we'll talk it over."

I should have been only too willing, for there was no room there for the horse, but the suspicious animal would not hear of it: he began to revolve immediately.

"Let us settle it now—here," I said, "I can't wait."

The job-master stroked away a grin. No doubt there *was* something unbusinesslike and unpractical in such precipitation, especially as combined with my appearance at the time.

"Well, you *ave* took a violent fancy to the 'orse, and no mistake, sir," he remarked.

"I never crossed a handsomer creature," I said; which was not prudent in a purchaser, but then, there was the animal himself to be conciliated.

"I don't know, really, as I can do without him just at this time of year," said the man. "I'm under-'orsed as it is for the work I've got to do."

A sweet relief stole over me: I had done all that could be expected of me. "I'm very sorry to hear that," I said, preparing to dismount. "That *is* a disappointment; but if you can't, there's an end of it."

"Don't you be afraid," said Brutus, "*he'll* sell me readily enough: make him an offer, quick!"

"I'll give you thirty guineas for him, come!" I said, knowing well enough that he would not take twice the money.

"I thought a gentleman like you would have had more insight into the value of a 'orse," he said: "why, his action alone is worth that, sir."

"You couldn't let me have the ac-

tion without the horse, I suppose?" I said, and I must have intended some joke.

It is unnecessary to prolong a painful scene. Brutus ran me up steadily from sum to sum, until his owner said at last: "Well, we won't 'aggle, sir, call it a hundred."

I had to call it a hundred, and what is more, it *was* a hundred. I took him without a warranty, without even a veterinary opinion. I could have been induced to take my purchase away then and there, as if I had been buying a canary, so unaccustomed was I to transactions of this kind, and I am afraid the job-master considered me little better than a fool.

So I found myself the involuntary possessor of a Houyhnhnm, or something even worse, and I walked back to my rooms in Park Street in a state of stupor. What was I to do with him? To ride an animal so brutally plain-spoken would be a continual penance; and yet, I should have to keep him, for I knew he was cunning enough to outwit any attempt to dispose of him. And to this, Love and Ambition had led me! I could not, after all I had said, approach Diana with any confidence as a mere pedestrian: the fact that I was in possession of a healthy horse which I never rode, would be sure to leak out in time, and how was I to account for it? I could see no way, and I groaned under an embarrassment which I dared not confide to the friendliest ear. I hated the monster that had saddled himself upon me, and looked in vain for any mode of escape.

I had to provide Brutus with stabling in another part of the town, for he proved exceedingly difficult to please: he found fault with everything, and I only wonder he did not demand that his stable should be fitted up with blue china and mezzotints. In his new quarters I left him for some days to his own devices: a course which I was glad to find, on visiting him again, had considerably reduced his arrogance. He wanted to go in the Row and see

the other horses, and it did not at all meet his views to be exercised there by a stableman at unfashionable hours. So he proposed a compromise. If I would only consent to mount him, he engaged to treat me with forbearance, and pointed out that he could give me, as he expressed it, various "tips" which would improve my seat. I was not blind to the advantages of such an arrangement. It is not every one who secures a riding-master in the person of his own horse: the horse is essentially a generous animal, and I felt that I might trust to Brutus's honour. And to do him justice, he observed the compact with strict good faith. Some of his "tips," it is true, very nearly tipped me off, but their result was to bring us closer together: our relations were less strained: it seemed to me that I gained more mastery over him every day, and was less stiff afterwards.

But I was not allowed to enjoy this illusion long. One day, when I innocently asked him if he found my hands improving, he turned upon me his off sardonic eye. "You'll *never* improve, old sack-of-beans [for he had come to address me with a freedom I burned to resent]: hands! why, you're sawing my mouth off all the time. And your feet 'home,' and tickling me under my shoulders at every stride—why, I'm half ashamed to be seen about with you."

I was deeply hurt. "I will spare you for the future," I said coldly: "this is my last appearance."

"Nonsense," he said, "you needn't show temper over it. Surely, if I can put up with it, *you* can! But we will make a new compact. [I never knew such a beast as he was for bargains.] You only worry me by interfering with the reins. Let 'em out, and leave everything to me. Just mention from time to time where you want to go, and I'll attend to it,—if I've nothing better to do."

I felt that such an understanding was destructive of all dignity, subverting, as it did, the natural relations

between horse and rider; but I had hardly any self-respect left, and I consented, since I saw no way of refusing. And on the whole, I cannot say, even now, that I had any grave reason for finding fault with the use Brutus made of my concessions: he showed more tact than I could have expected in disguising the merely nominal nature of my authority.

I had only one serious complaint against him, which was that he had a habit of breaking suddenly away with a merely formal apology, to exchange equine civilities with some cob or mare, to whose owner I was a perfect stranger, thus driving me to invent the most desperate excuses to cover my seeming intrusion; but I managed to account for it in various ways, and even made a few acquaintances in this irregular and involuntary manner. I could have wished he had been a less susceptible animal, for, though his flirtations were merely Platonic, it is rather humiliating to have to play "gooseberry" to one's own horse, a part which I was constantly being called upon to perform!

As it happened, Diana was away in Paris that Easter, and we had not met since my appearance in the Row; but I knew she would be in town again shortly, and with consummate diplomacy I began to excite Brutus's curiosity by sundry careless, half-slighting allusions to Miss Chetwynd's little mare, Wild Rose. "She's too frisky for my taste," I said, "but she's been a good deal admired, though I dare say you wouldn't be particularly struck by her."

So that, on the first afternoon of Diana's return to the Row, I found it easy, under cover of giving Brutus an opportunity of forming an opinion, to prevail on him to carry me to her side. Diana, who was with a certain Lady Verney, her chaperon, welcomed me with a charming smile.

"I had no idea you could ride so well," she said, "you manage that beautiful horse of yours so very easily—with such light hands, too."

This was not irony, for I could now give my whole mind to my seat; and, as I never interfered at all with the steering apparatus, my hands must have seemed the perfection of lightness.

"He wants delicate handling," I answered carelessly, "but he goes very well with *me*."

"I wish you would let me try his paces some morning, Pulvertoft," struck in a Colonel Cockshott, who was riding with them, and whom I knew slightly: "I've a notion he would go better on the curb."

"I shall be very happy," I began, when, just in time, I noticed a warning depression in Brutus's ears. The Colonel rode about sixteen stone, and with spurs! "I mean," I added hastily, "I should have been—only, to tell you the truth, I couldn't conscientiously trust any one on him but myself."

"My dear fellow!" said the Colonel, who I could see was offended, "I've not met many horses in my time that I couldn't manage."

"I think Mr. Pulvertoft is *quite* right," said Diana. "When a horse gets accustomed to one he does so resent a strange hand: it spoils his temper for days. I never will lend Wild Rose to anybody for that very reason!"

The Colonel fell back in the rear in a decided sulk. "Poor dear Colonel Cockshott!" said Diana, "he is so proud of his riding, but I think he dragoons a horse. I don't call that *riding*, do you?"

"Well—hardly," I agreed, with easy disparagement. "I never believe in ruling a horse by fear."

"I suppose you are very fond of yours?" she said.

"Fond is not the word!" I exclaimed—and it certainly was not.

"I am not sure that what I said about lending Wild Rose would apply to *you*," she said. "I think you would be gentle with her."

I was certain that I should treat her with all consideration; but as I doubted whether she would wholly

reciprocate it, I said I should regard riding her as akin to profanation.

As Brutus and I were going home, he observed that it was a good thing I had not agreed to lend him to the Colonel.

"Yes," I said, determined to improve the occasion, "you might not have found him as considerate as,—well, as some people!"

"I meant it was a good thing for *you*!" he hinted darkly, and I did not care to ask for an explanation. "What did you mean," he resumed, "by saying that I should not admire Wild Rose? Why, she is charming—charming!"

"In that case," I said, "I don't mind riding with her mistress occasionally—to oblige you."

"You don't mind!" he said, "you will *have* to, my boy! and every afternoon."

I suppressed a chuckle: after all, man *is* the nobler animal. I could manage a horse in my own way. My little *ruse* had succeeded: I should have no more forced introductions to mystified strangers.

And now for some weeks my life passed in a happy dream. I only lived for those hours in the Row, where Brutus turned as naturally to Wild Rose as the sunflower to the sun, and Diana and I grew more intimate every day. Happiness and security made me almost witty. I was merciless in my raillery of the eccentric exhibitions of horsemanship which were to be met with, and Diana was provoked by my comments to the sweetest silvery laughter. As for Colonel Cockshott, whom I had once suspected of a desire to be my rival, he had long become a "negligible quantity;" and if I delayed in asking Diana to trust me with her sweet self, it was only because I found an epicurean pleasure in prolonging a suspense that was so little uncertain.

And then, without warning, my riding was interrupted for a while. Brutus was discovered, much to his annoyance, to have a saddle-raw, and was even so unjust as to lay the blame

on me, though, for my own part, I thought it a mark of apt, though tardy, retribution. I was not disposed to tempt Fortune upon any other mount, but I could not keep away from the Row, nevertheless, and appeared there on foot. I saw Diana riding with the Colonel, who seemed to think his opportunity had come at last; but whenever she passed the railings on which I leaned, she would raise her eyebrows and draw her mouth down into a little curve of resigned boredom, which completely reassured me. Still, I was very glad when Brutus was well again, and we were cantering down the Row once more, both in the highest spirits.

"I never heard the horses here *whinny* so much as they do this season," I said, by way of making conversation. "Can you account for it at all?" For he sometimes gave me pieces of information which enabled me to impress Diana afterwards by my intimate knowledge of horses.

"Whinnying?" he said. "They're *laughing*, that's what they're doing—and no wonder!"

"Oh!" said I, "and what's the joke?"

"Why, *you* are!" he replied. "You don't suppose you take them in, do you? They know all about you, bless your heart!"

"Oh, do they?" I said blankly. This brute took a positive pleasure, I believe, in reducing my self-esteem.

"I dare say it has got about through Wild Rose," he continued. "She was immensely tickled when I told her. I'm afraid she must have been feeling rather dull all these days, by the bye."

I felt an unworthy impulse to take his conceit down as he had lowered mine.

"Not so very, I think," I said. "She seemed to me to find that brown hunter of Colonel Coekshott's a very agreeable substitute."

Late as it is for reparation, I must acknowledge with shame that in uttering this insinuation, I did that poor little mare (for whom I entertained the highest respect) a shameful injustice;

and I should like to state here, in the most solemn and emphatic manner, my sincere belief that, from first to last, she conducted herself in a manner that should have shielded her from all calumny.

It was only a mean desire to retaliate, a petty and ignoble spite, that prompted me thus to poison Brutus's confidence, and I regretted the words as soon as I had uttered them.

"That beast!" he said, starting as if I had touched him with a whip—a thing I never used—"why, he hasn't two ideas in his great fiddle-head. The only sort of officer *he* ought to carry is a Salvationist!"

"I grant he has not your personal advantages and charm of manner," I said. "No doubt I was wrong to say anything about it."

"No," he said, "you—you have done me a service," and he relapsed into a sombre silence.

I was riding with Diana as usual, and was about to express my delight at being able to resume our companionship, when her mare drew slightly ahead and lashed out suddenly, catching me on the left leg, and causing intense agony for the moment.

Diana showed the sweetest concern, imploring me to go home in a cab at once, while her groom took charge of Brutus. I declined the cab; but, as my leg was really painful, and Brutus was showing an impatience I dared not disregard, I had to leave her side.

On our way home, Brutus said moodily, "It is all over between us—you saw that?"

"I felt it!" I replied. "She nearly broke my leg."

"It was intended for me," he said. "It was her way of signifying that we had better be strangers for the future. I taxed her with her faithlessness: she denied it, of course—every mare does: we had an explanation, and everything is at an end!"

I did not ride him again for some days, and when I did, I found him steeped in Byronic gloom. He even wanted at first to keep entirely on the

Bayswater side of the Park, though I succeeded in arguing him out of such weakness. "Be a horse!" I said. "Show her you don't care. You only flatter her by betraying your feelings."

This was a subtlety that had evidently not occurred to him, but he was intelligent enough to feel the force of what I said. "You are right," he admitted; "you are not quite a fool in some things. She shall see how little I care!"

Naturally, after this, I expected to accompany Diana as usual, and it was a bitter disappointment to me to find that Brutus would not hear of doing so. He had an old acquaintance in the Park, a dapple-grey, who, probably from some early disappointment, was a confirmed cynic, and whose society he thought would be congenial just then. The grey was ridden regularly by a certain Miss Gittens, whose appearance as she titupped laboriously up and down had often furnished Diana and myself with amusement.

And now, in spite of all my efforts, Brutus made straight to the grey. I was not in such difficulties as might have been expected, for I happened to know Miss Gittens slightly, as a lady no longer in the bloom of youth, who still retained a wiry form of girlishness. Though rather disliking her than not, I found it necessary just then to throw some slight effusion into my greeting. She, not unnaturally perhaps, was flattered by my preference, and begged me to give her a little instruction in riding, which—Heaven forgive me for it!—I took upon myself to do.

Even now I scarcely see how I could have acted otherwise: I could not leave her side until Brutus had exhausted the pleasures of cynicism with his grey friend, and the time had to be filled up somehow. But, oh, the torture of seeing Diana at a distance, and knowing that only a miserable misunderstanding between our respective steeds kept us apart, feeling constrained even to avoid looking in her direction, lest she should summon me to her!

One day, as I was riding with Miss Gittens, she glanced coyly at me over her sharp right shoulder, and said, "Do you know, only such a little while ago, I never even dreamed that we should ever become as intimate as we are now: it seems almost incredible, does it not?"

"You must not say so," I replied. "Surely there is nothing singular in my helping you a little with your riding?" Though it struck me that it would have been very singular if I had.

"Perhaps not singular," she murmured, looking modestly down her nose: "but will you think me very unmaidenly if I confess that, to me, those lessons have developed a dawning danger?"

"You are perfectly safe on the grey," I said.

"I—I was not thinking of the grey," she returned. "Dear Mr. Pulvertoft, I must speak frankly—a girl has so many things to consider, and I am afraid you have made me forget how wrongly and thoughtlessly I have been behaving of late. I cannot help suspecting that you must have some motive in seeking my society in so—so marked a manner."

"Miss Gittens," said I, "I can disguise nothing. I have."

"And you have not been merely amusing yourself all this time?"

"Before Heaven," I cried with fervour, "I have *not*!"

"You are not one of those false men who give their bridle-reins a shake, and ride off with 'Adieu for evermore!'—tell me you are not?"

I might shake *my* bridle-reins till I was tired and nothing would come of it until Brutus was in the humour to depart; so that I was able to assure her with truth that I was not at all that kind of person.

"Then why not let your heart speak?"

"There is such a thing," I said gloomily, "as a heart that is gagged."

"Can no word, no hint of mine loosen the gag?" she wished to know.

"What, you are silent still? Then, Mr. Pulvertoft, though I may seem harsh and cruel in saying it, our pleasant intercourse must end—we must ride together no more!"

No more? What would Brutus say to that? I was horrified. "Miss Gittens," I said in great agitation, "I entreat you to unsay those words. I—I am afraid I could not undertake to accept such a dismissal. Surely, after that, you will not insist?"

She sighed. "I am a weak, foolish girl," she said: "you are only too able to overcome my judgment.—There, Mr. Pulvertoft, look happy again—I relent. You may stay if you will!"

You must believe that I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself, for I could not be blind to the encouragement which, though I sought to confine my words to strict truth, I was innocently affording. But, with a horse like mine, what was a man to do? What would you have done yourself? As soon as was prudent, I hinted to Brutus that his confidences had lasted long enough; and as he trotted away with me, he remarked, "I thought you were never going." Was he weary of the grey already? My heart leaped. "Brutus," I said thickly, "are you strong enough to bear a great joy?"

"Speak out," he said, "and do try to keep those heels out of my ribs."

"I cannot see you suffer," I told him, with a sense of my own hypocrisy all the time. "I must tell you—circumstances have come to my knowledge which lead me to believe that we have both judged Wild Rose too hastily. I am sure that her heart is yours still. She is only longing to tell you that she has never really swerved from her allegiance."

"It is too late now," he said, and the back of his head looked inflexibly obstinate, "we have kept asunder too long."

"No," I said, "listen. I take more interest in you than you are, perhaps, aware of, and I have thought of a

little plan for bringing you together again. What if I find an opportunity to see the lady she belongs to—we have not met lately, as you know, and I do not pretend that I desire a renewal of our intimacy—"

"You like the one on the grey best: I saw that long ago," he said, and I left him in his error.

"In any case, for your sake, I will sacrifice myself," I said magnanimously. "I will begin to-morrow. Come, you will not let your lives be wrecked by a foolish lovers' quarrel?"

He made a little half-hearted opposition, but finally, as I knew he would, consented. I had gained my point: I was free from Miss Gittens at last!

That evening, I met Diana in the hall of a house in Eaton Square. She was going down stairs as I was making my way to the ball-room, and greeted me with a rather cool little nod.

"You have quite deserted me lately," she said smiling, but I could read the reproach in her eyes, "you never ride with us now."

My throat was swelling with passionate eloquence—and I could not get any of it out.

"No, I never do," was all my stupid tongue could find to say.

"You have discovered a more congenial companion," said cruel Diana.

"Miss Chetwynd," I said eagerly, "you don't know how I have been wishing—Will you let me ride with you to-morrow, as—as you used to do?"

"You are quite sure you won't be afraid of my naughty Wild Rose?" she said. "I have given her such a scolding, that I think she is thoroughly ashamed of herself."

"You thought it was *that* that kept me!" I cried. "Oh, if I could tell you!"

She smiled: she was my dear, friendly Diana again.

"You shall tell me all about it to-morrow," she said. "You will not have another opportunity, because we are going to Aix on Friday. And now, good night. I am stopping the

way, and the linkman is getting quite excited over it."

She passed on, and the carriage rolled away with her, and I was too happy to mind very much—had she not forgiven me? Should we not meet to-morrow? I should have two whole hours to declare myself in, and this time I would dally with Fortune no longer.

How excited I was the following day: how fearful, when the morning broke grey and lowering: how grateful, when the benignant sun shone out later, and promised a brilliant afternoon: how carefully I dressed, and what a price I paid for the flower for my buttonhole!

So we cantered on to the Row, as goodly a pair (if I may be pardoned this retrospective vanity) as any there; and by and by, I saw, with the quick eye of a lover, Diana's willowy form in the distance. She was not alone, but I knew that the Colonel would soon have to yield his place to me.

As soon as she saw me, she urged her mare to a trot, and came towards me with the loveliest faint blush and dawning smile of welcome, when, all at once, Brutus came to a dead stop, which nearly threw me on his neck, and stood quivering in every limb.

"Do you see that?" he said hoarsely. "And I was about to forgive her!"

I saw: my insinuation, baseless enough at the beginning, was now but too well justified. Colonel Cockshott was on his raw-boned brown hunter, and even my brief acquaintance with horses enabled me to see that Wild Rose no longer regarded him with indifference.

Diana and the Colonel had reined up and seemed waiting for me—would Brutus never move? "Show your pride," I said in an agonised whisper. "Treat her with the contempt she deserves!"

"I will," he said between his bit and clenched teeth.

And then Miss Gittens came bumping by on the grey, and, before I could interfere, my Houyhnhnm was off like

a shot in pursuit. I saw Diana's sweet, surprised face: I heard the Colonel's jarring laugh as I passed, and I—I could only bow in mortified appeal, and long for a gulf to leap into like Curtius!

I don't know what I said to Miss Gittens. I believe I made myself recklessly amiable, and I remember she lingered over parting in a horribly emotional manner. I was too miserable to mind: all the time I was seeing Diana's astonished eyes, hearing Colonel Cockshott's heartless laugh. Brutus made a kind of explanation on our way home: "You meant well," he said, "but you see you were wrong. Your proposed sacrifice, for which I am just as grateful to you as if it had been effected, was useless. All I could do in return was to take you where your true inclination lay. I too can be unselfish."

I was too dejected to curse his unselfishness. I did not even trouble myself to explain what it had probably cost me. I only felt drearily that I had had my last ride, I had had enough of horsemanship for ever!

That evening I went to the theatre, I wanted to deaden thought for the moment; and during one of the intervals I saw Lady Verney in the stalls, and went up to speak to her. "Your niece is not with you?" I said; "I thought I should have had a chance of—of saying good-bye to her before she left for the continent."

I had a lingering hope that she might ask me to lunch, that I might have one more opportunity of explaining.

"Oh," said Lady Verney, "but that is all changed, we are not going, at least, not yet."

"Not going!" I cried, incredulous for very joy.

"No, it is all very sudden; but,—well, you are almost like an old friend, and you are sure to hear it sooner or later. I only knew myself this afternoon, when she came in from her ride. Colonel Cockshott has proposed and she has accepted him. We're so pleased about it. Wasn't dear

Mrs.—delightful in that last act? I positively saw real tears on her face!"

If I had waited much longer she would have seen a similar realism on mine. But I went back and sat the interval out, and listened critically to the classical selection of chamber-music from the orchestra, and saw the rest of the play, though I have no notion how it ended.

All that night my heart was slowly consumed by a dull rage that grew with every sleepless hour; but the object of my resentment was not Diana. She had only done what as a woman she was amply justified in doing after the pointed slight I had apparently inflicted upon her. Her punishment was sufficient already, for I guessed that she had only accepted the Colonel under the first intolerable sting of desertion. No: I reserved all my wrath for Brutus, who had betrayed me at the moment of triumph. I planned revenge. Cost what it might I would ride him once more. In the eyes of the law I was his master. I would exercise my legal rights to the full.

The afternoon came at last. I was in a white heat of anger, though there were bystanders who put a more uncharitable construction upon my complexion as I ascended to the saddle.

Brutus cast an uneasy eye at my heels as we started: "What are those things you've got on?" he inquired.

"Spurs," I replied curtly.

"You shouldn't wear them till you have learnt to turn your toes in," he said. "And a whip, too! may I ask what that is for?"

"We will discuss that presently," I said very coldly; for I did not want to have a scene with my horse in the street.

When we came round by the statue of Achilles and on to the Ride, I shortened my reins, and got a better hold of the whip, while I found that, from some cause I cannot explain, the roof of my mouth grew uncomfortably dry.

"I should be glad of a little quiet talk with you, if you've no objection," I began.

"I am quite at your disposal," he said, champing his bit with a touch of irony.

"First, let me tell you," I said, "that I have lost my only love for ever."

"Well," he retorted flippantly, "you won't die of it. So have I. We must endeavour to console one another!"

I still maintained a deadly calm. "You seem unaware that you are the sole cause of my calamity," I said. "Had you only consented to face Wild Rose yesterday, I should have been a happy man by this time!"

"How was I to know that, when you let me think all your affections were given to the elderly thing who is trotted out by my friend the grey?"

"We won't argue, please," I said hastily. "It is enough that your infernal egotism and self-will have ruined my happiness. I have allowed you to usurp the rule, to reverse our natural positions. I shall do so no more. I intend to teach you a lesson you will never forget."

For a horse, he certainly had a keen sense of humour. I thought the girths would have snapped.

"And when do you intend to begin?" he asked, as soon as he could speak.

I looked in front of me: there were Diana and her accepted lover riding towards us; and so natural is dissimulation, even to the sweetest and best women, that no one would have suspected from her radiant face that her gaiety covered an aching heart.

"I intend to begin *now*," I said. "Monster, demon, whatever you are that have held me in thrall so long, I have broken my chains! I have been a coward long enough. You may kill me if you like. I rather hope you will; but first I mean to pay you back some of the humiliation with which you have loaded me. I intend

to thrash you as long as I remain in the saddle."

I have been told by eye-witnesses that the chastisement was of brief duration, but while it lasted, I flatter myself, it was severe. I laid into him with a stout whip, of whose effectiveness I had assured myself by experiments upon my own legs. I dug my borrowed spurs into his flanks. I jerked his mouth. I dare say he was almost as much surprised as pained. But he *was* pained!

I was about to continue my practical rebuke, when my victim suddenly evaded my grasp; and for one vivid second I seemed to be gazing upon a birdseye view of his back; and then there was a crash, and I lay, buzzing like a bee, in an iridescent fog, and each colour meant a different pain, and they faded at last into darkness, and I remember no more.

"It was weeks," concluded Mr. Pulvertoft, "before that darkness lifted and revealed me to myself as a strapped and bandaged invalid. But—and this is perhaps the most curious part of my narrative—almost the first sounds that reached my ears were those of wedding bells; and I knew, without requiring to be told, that they were ringing for Diana's marriage with the Colonel. *That* showed there wasn't much the matter with me,

didn't it? Why, I can hear them everywhere now. I don't think she ought to have had them rung at Sandown though: it was just a little ostentatious, so long after the ceremony, don't you think so?"

"Yes—yes," I said; "but you never told me what became of the horse."

"Ah! the horse—yes. I am looking for him. I'm not so angry with him as I was, and I don't like to ask too many questions at the stables, for fear they may tell me one day that they had to shoot him while I was so ill. You knew I was ill, I dare say!" he broke off: "there were bulletins about me in the papers, look here."

He handed me a cutting on which I read:

"THE RECENT ACCIDENT IN ROTTEN ROW.
—There is no change as yet in Mr. Pulvertoft's condition. The unfortunate gentleman is still lying unconscious at his rooms in Park Street; and his medical attendants fear that, even if he recovers his physical strength, the brain will be permanently injured."

"But that was all nonsense!" said Mr. Pulvertoft, with a little nervous laugh, "it wasn't injured a bit, or how could I remember everything so clearly as I do, you know?"

And this was an argument that was, of course, unanswerable.

F. ANSTEY.

THE WENDS IN THE SPREEWALD.

LITTLE more than fifty miles from Berlin, in the province of Brandenburg, and on the affluents of the same river which flows through the capital, there still exists a population, isolated by the nature of the country they occupy, displaying a different physical type and speaking a different language from the rest of Germany. The student of ethnology as well as the lover of nature will find few districts in modern Europe so curious and interesting as the marshlands of the Spree, where this branch of the ancient Wendish stock has retained all its ancient characteristics unchanged down to the present time. But already the hand of change is upon them. To-day the German language only is taught in their schools: the number of churches where the office is read in Wendish is rapidly decreasing: forced military service and situations in the city familiarise the young folk with the life of their German neighbours: the traveller finds his way up the water-channels which are their only roads; and the time is not difficult to foresee when the old Slavonic language will go the way of the Cornish.

The Wends were a tribe of that great horde of Slaves who, marching westward from central Asia, established themselves in all the country east of the Elbe and north of the Danube: pressing hard upon the Germanic races who had occupied it before them, the Quadi in the south, the Marcomanni in the centre, and the Goths in the north, and driving these west and south to overrun the Roman Empire, to master Gaul and Spain, and penetrate into northern Africa. They are not to be identified, as the similarity of name might suggest, with the Vandals, an error into which both

Carlyle and Gibbon have fallen.¹ The Vandals are generally agreed to have been of one and the same stock with the Goths; while the Wends, as any one may prove to himself to-day, are of the pure Slavonic type and speak a purely Slavonic language. Their Germanic predecessors were at the time of the eastern invasion tending to become an agricultural people, and therefore, according to Dr. Felix Dahn, they gave these pastoral nomads, who called themselves *Slovenen*, the distinguishing name of *Wenden*, a corruption of *die Weiden*, the Pasturers.

History of the Wends there is little enough of. Marching westward somewhere in the fourth century, they inundated these lands, settled themselves down by what struggles we know not, and were masters here until the ninth or tenth. Already, even in the eighth century, the reaction had begun. The German, reasserting his right of priority, pressed upon the Wendish border; and early in the tenth, Henry the Fowler drove them from the fort of Brannibor, as the present Brandenburg was then named. Then, in 937, it was Gero, the great Markgraf, who was intrusted by King Otto the First with the mission of putting down the Wends, and who subdued the whole country between the Elbe and the Oder. In the eleventh

¹ "In the northern parts, these immigrating Slaves were of the kind called Vandals or Wends."—Carlyle's 'Frederick the Great,' bk. ii. ch. i. Gibbon (ch. xli.) says, "Several populous villages of Lusatia are inhabited by the Vandals; they still preserve their language, their customs, and the purity of their blood." But he subsequently adds that the use of a Slavonian dialect points to their being rather the successors of the genuine Vandals, who succeeded to their country and, as he seems to have thought, their name.

century they once again assert themselves, victoriously rising in the neighbourhood of Brandenburg; and then through successive years were beaten on by various Markgraves till the days of Albert the Bear, who determined to christianise them and beat them out of history altogether. This he accomplished after a three days' fight, when the Wends broken in spirit retired, what was left of them, into the impenetrable forests and marshes. The legend exists among the people still, how the last of the Wendish Princes, Pribislaw, or another as some say, made his way upon a raft into the heart of the marshlands of the Upper Spree, to found at Burg a fort where he long stood at bay; and certainly there are at Burg the lines of a primitive fortress of considerable extent, known as the Schlossberg, still rising high above the flood-line.

Many dim stories live in the popular tradition of the ancient glory of this Wendish Prince: how he shod his horses with shoes reversed that none should follow in his tracks, and was used to cross the numberless streams on a magical leathern bridge which rolled up of itself behind him. This legend, with others of the wild huntsman and the headless rider, seems to point back to a period before the occupation of the Spreewald; for if the marshes are scarcely accessible to a horseman now they can hardly have been so a thousand years ago, when the whole country was a tangled growth of primal forest, luxuriating from the spongy soil. In those days of the Wendish Prince, the old men say, there stood on the ramparts a splendid castle, which sunk under the earth by enchantment in the day of defeat. There in the buried castle sits the Wendish Princess spinning, bound by a spell to make twelve flaxen shirts, but only to work one stitch in the year. When all are completed the spell will be broken, the castle will rise from the earth once more, and the sceptre return to the Wends. Surely Hans Andersen must

have been here! Once, the story goes, there was a deep hole yawning in the centre of the ancient fort, so deep you might count minutes before a falling stone was heard to ring below. Down this hole a traveller dared to be lowered, attached to a long rope with a signal cord in his hand. When he reached the bottom, he said, it grew quite light, and he could see four iron doors opening one from each side of a square chamber; but in front of every door there lay coiled a huge snake, and as they reared their heads against him he grew afraid, pulled at the signal cord, and so was drawn up again.

Since the days of Albert the Bear and the Ascanien Markgraves, his successors, the Niederlausitz (Lusatia) with Lübbenau, the chief town of the Spreewald, has had many masters. Bought by the Bohemian crown in 1364, it fell to Brandenburg in 1448, and to Hungary for nineteen years in 1471, but remained practically Bohemian all the while, its institutions and coinage undergoing no change. In 1637 Lübbenau became Saxon, and so remained until the reconstitution of Europe in 1815, when the Congress of Vienna assigned it to Prussia.

The largest town, however, in the marshes of the Spree is Lübben, on the western border, which has a population of over six thousand. A bright and picturesque little place, through which the river flows in several channels to its confluence with the Berste. The streets are planted with lime, chestnut and ash, the doors gay with oleanders, and the windows full of flowers. Portions of an old *schloss* with a rich *Renaissance* gable, and a tower with walls of abnormal thickness, suggest some outpost of the Markgraves against rebellious barbarism; but of its history or founder there appears to be no record, unless some one cunning in heraldry can identify that shield with the many quarterings, surrounded by eight helmets in a row, which is carved above the entrance-door. All round Lübben are rich marshy meadow-lands which yield three hay crops in the

year; and those who come from the monotonous corn-flats of Pomerania and the sandy fir forests of Northern Brandenburg, are struck with the warmth of the colouring when the sun lights up the red-tiled roofs of Lübben and punts laden with grass or rushes glide along the narrow channels. Already horses and carts are dispensed with: the meadows are intersected in every direction by little streams; and all the carrying is along the water-ways in light punts, propelled by a kind of paddle-pole terminating in a long narrow blade and shod with a crescent-shaped ferrule of steel. These punts are used throughout the Spreewald, and a pretty sight it is at sunset to see them returning home in long procession, swiftly and silently, piled three feet high with fresh-cut hay, and urged perhaps by two Wendish women in their red skirts and full white linen head-dress.

The forest of the Upper Spree, which now covers barely a fourth part of its old area, is entered a few miles from Lübben. The boat glides in among the alder trees, whose branches meet above the channel, as into an enchanted wood. The banks are tall rushes, shaped like double-edged sword-blades of the most pliant steel: beyond, the tangled undergrowth, rich marsh grass and ferns: on either side, except where branching streams divide to right and left, the endless colonnade of tapering grey stems melting in the distance to one harmonious tone with the soft green of the foliage, every reflection drawn clear and true in the still water. Sometimes a tree leans obliquely over the channel, a bridge for the squirrels: silence everywhere, hardly a bird's note,—the silence of solitude. Then at the end of the long aisle of trees a gleam of sunlight breaks through, and across the gleam darts a kingfisher, the spirit of this solitude, with the light striking on his sapphire wings. This is the aspect of the late summer: a little earlier in the year, and these woods were all one song of nightingales.

But in winter, the whole country, meadow and forest alike, from Lübben away to Cottbus and Peitz, is one wide lake, sixteen or seventeen miles in length and five or six in breadth. Then only the alders of the wood, the willows that mark the channel, and the artificial banks, on which the Wends have built their log-houses and laid out their gardens and their flax-plots, appear above the dismal waters. When the winter is a hard one, it is all one great sheet of ice, and then only can the foresters work. In spring and summer, when the sap is in the tree, the wood cannot be cut: in the flood-time the waters stand two feet above the roots. But when the ice is frozen hard enough to bear, the woodman is busy: the growth of thirty years is felled, and the trunks lie upon the ice until the thaw sets in.

For several hours the way lies through the forest. The stranger is bewildered by the network of streams, more puzzling to the uninitiated than a labyrinth of paths; and when at length the open country is reached, the meadows are filled with workers in their Wendish dresses, and the language spoken in the passing boats is an unknown tongue. The streams, seldom more than a dozen feet in width, still divide the meadows into islands: minnows dart across the sandy bottom: the banks are one mass of flowering rush, arrow-head, forget-me-not, and countless other blooms: sometimes a willow or a line of alders shades the bank, and beyond is always the luxuriant grass. Then the first houses of the extensive settlement of Burg come into view: houses built in the Russian manner of horizontal logs, roofed with a high gabled thatch. Now, at intervals, the channels are spanned by light bridges of planks, built high to be beyond reach of the winter floods, approached by steps on either side. And when, as the boat passes under these bridges, a Wendish woman leans against the rustic hand-rail, with her bare feet on the narrow boards raised on their slender pole

supports, her white cap and red skirt with its rough-spun blue apron defined against the background of alder and reflected in the water below, the artist sees his composition ready made.

The settlement of Burg (pronounced Burk) covers some twenty miles with its garden-plots and scattered houses, only a small number of which are gathered round the church. Here excavations have brought to light traces of a people before the Wends. Some twenty minutes' distance from the church, built in the closing years of the last century, are the lines of the ancient fortress, about four hundred by two hundred yards in area, where the Wends are said to have made their last stand for independence, of which they tell the wild legend aforesaid. The log-houses have all their little gardens, plots for vegetables, and stalls for cattle, on ground drained by the surrounding trench, and raised above the flood-level by the earth thrown up from the trench, the banks of which are secured by piles and require constant attention. Generally a belt of alders and willows closes in each small domain, and patches of arable land are artificially secured in the same manner. The old pastoral nature of the people has left its trace, and cattle, all stalled, are a great part of their wealth. The little plots, richly manured and farmed with untiring industry, bear two crops in the year: the gardens are bright with fruit-trees and cucumber-beds: Lübbenau supplies Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, and Stettin with this vegetable so indispensable to German tables; and the whole country has a flourishing and cheerful aspect.

So much may be done with the marsh-country, and an economist might here profitably study the much-tormented question of small holdings. Frederick the Great settled some hundred Austrian immigrants near Burg, on allotments of about twenty acres of what was at that time forest-growth. A hundred years have passed, and their descendants, who have adopted Wendish manners and speech, are almost all

of them well off. The two other principal settlements are Leipe and Lebde. All that may be said of Burg holds good of them; except that they are more picturesque from their greater compactness, and that lying rather nearer to frequented roads they seem to have more touch of the outside world. Each of these villages is, as it were, a rustic Venice, with log-houses for palaces, bridges of planks for bridges of stone, and flowering banks for quays. Within, the houses are clean: the smoky kitchen with its rows of quaintly fashioned earthen pots and pans, where at meal times the family all eat together out of one great bowl: the rude four-post beds: the spinning-wheels: the wooden jugs and tubs, which are the winter handiwork of the men when the meadows are under water—all these combine to make a picture of primitive life which one would scarcely look to find but fifty miles from a great European capital. Or go into the village school and watch the pedantic old schoolmaster with strange gesticulations beating time for the singing of a hymn, while in front of him in rows sit the little bare-legged children, all dressed, down to the tiniest, in the national costume, the red skirt and the clean white linen cap—you almost seem to be in that magic land of opera-bouffe, where peasants are always beautiful and aprons always clean. On Sunday the life is seen at its gayest round the village church: the white handkerchief shading the head is replaced by a wonder of starching and ironing with silk bands falling behind: a silk necktie and ornaments of amber or silver light up the short-sleeved velvet bodice above the red or dark blue skirt reaching a little below the knee. The bare feet of every day are covered with stockings, and often silk stockings, which the girls take off as they leave the church, and keep as their most precious possession. In winter a short jacket with very full wadded sleeves is added. Each occasion has its own distinctive dress for the women: the men have almost ceased

to wear any individual costume, though one characteristic is noticeable, namely that they are nearly all clean-shaven. A large Elizabethan ruff is worn by brides, with a wreath of myrtle twigs: the bridesmaids have the ruff also with a red silk handkerchief on the head, a silk apron, and an embroidered scarf. The ruff is also worn by girls on the occasion of their first communion, when they are otherwise dressed entirely in black: black also is the mourning dress, with white cap and white handkerchief over the shoulders. Round the coffin before a funeral the female relatives sit enveloped in a white sheet with only the eyes and the hands visible. Both weddings and funerals at Burg are conducted with strange old-world ceremonies connected with the superstitions of the past, pathetically picturesque. When the head of a family has died, immediately the windows are opened to give the soul free passage, and the heir announces it first of all to the cattle and the bees—

“ Bees, Bees, your master’s dead,
I am master now instead.”

The day before the funeral a candle is lighted for every year of the dead man’s life: the female relatives in their white sheets sit round lamenting, while a chorus of girls sing a burial hymn, and speeches are made recording his worth. Then, when the coffin is carried out, the bench on which it has rested is immediately thrown down, that no one may inadvertently sit upon it and die. The procession of boats moves slowly and solemnly to the burial ground: in the first the priest and choir, next the coffin hidden in flowers, and then the white-shrouded mourners crooning strange funeral chants—and so they wind away between the grassy banks and the willows.

As with other Slavonic tribes, music and dancing are the passion of the Wends: their language is especially adapted for song, and the spiritual side of the people has as yet only found

its primitive expression in melody. The national vice is also one which they are reported to share with the rest of the Slavonic stock, namely, spirit-drinking: once it was honey-mead and the spirit distilled from the birch tree, now it is the common and pernicious *branntwein*. Otherwise they are a law-abiding people and thoroughly loyal, in spite of the tradition that there is always a secretly elected king among them. Industry, courage, honour, and hospitality their chroniclers have always credited them with: so faithful indeed, says a letter of the eighth century, were their woman-kind, that wives immolated themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands; and if in those early times a custom prevailed which modern sensitiveness must repudiate, the custom of prematurely terminating the lives of the aged, it was prompted by the laudable motive of hastening their journey to the gods. As late as the year 1520, Lewin von der Schulenburg rescued an old man who was being dragged away into the forest by the younger members of his family—Abraham about to be sacrificed by Isaac. “Where are you taking him to?” he cried. “To God,” was the grim answer. However, the tough old gentleman was placed beyond the reach of his too zealous family, and survived twenty years as door-keeper in the castle of his deliverer.

The Marshlands are full of quaint legends and primitive superstitions, which have been recorded by various inquirers in the simple fashion in which they are related by the older folk. Some of them recall dim memories of a past greatness, legends of castles and treasures that the swamp has engulfed, and of headless warriors that gallop by night; but the greater number deal with the weird, the uncanny, the Evil Forces (*Vis Maligna*) of Nature. It is easy to understand how, in these isolated dwellings surrounded each by its tall belt of trees, with the wan floods of winter beyond, and the lurid marsh sunsets fading into the long winter night, there would arise

this awe of the supernatural; and no less in the moonlit summer nights, when the hot day had drawn the vapours from the sodden earth, the benighted reaper urging his boat home through the dark alder-woods, with their slender branches fantastically closing over the narrow channels, would see the mists gather into phantom shapes and hear strange voices in the shadow.

The Water-Nyx, they say, lurks in the deep places. There is a Nyx in every mill-dam. His skin is white, he is dressed all in red and has a red cap, and is the size of a six-year old child: indeed, some say, drowned children turn to Nyxes. Often when the punts cross the deep places, the Nyx will hold fast to the pole, and at night he will turn the punt's head and prevent its passing. He will cling also to the mill-wheel: when the wheel creaks you may know the Nyx is at his mischief. So late as twenty years ago the millers would throw black ducks and loaves of bread into the water when the mill-wheel creaked: then the Nyx let go, but if not thus propitiated he broke the mill-boards and did all sorts of harm. One day on the Schlossberg people saw a Nyx sitting, mending his shoes. "What are you doing that for?" said one. "Our folk are going away to-morrow," the little man replied, "and I am going with them." After that no one saw the Nyx for a long time.

Then there is the Bud: a little man with a light in his hand who flits about over marsh and dry land, and sometimes, as you watch him, he will divide and become two. Children who die unbaptised turn into Buds.

A little lake, known as the Koboldsee, has the usual legend of a vanished castle, whose turrets rise above the ripples once in the year and sink again almost immediately. In the Koboldsee lives a Kobold. He married a Wendish maiden and many years they lived together in a cave under the lake, and had a child half human and half Kobold. Then one day:

"Down swung the sound of a far off bell.

She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea;

She said, 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.'"

But the Kobold was loth to let her go; and he made his conditions that she should speak no word to any one, and come away before the blessing; and so she went. But when the prayers were over and the priest rose to give the blessing she broke her word and stayed; and as she turned to go she saw the Kobold at the door waiting for her, and she fainted away from fear. Then the priest came and heard her story; and he bade her throw the Kobold's ring back into the lake; and after that she was free and never saw her husband again. The shores of the Koboldsee are haunted at noon by the mid-day witch, the Pschesponiza, who lames or injures all that come in her way; and a stout-hearted Wend he would be who should venture there between eleven and noon.

The belief in witches is very strong. Some go so far as to say they can change their shape and become invisible: one thing at least is certain, they always know, however far away they may be, when any one is speaking of them: so it is best to keep silence, for they will infallibly revenge an ill word. The witch test is a simple one: you have only to lay a broom or a shoe in the path of any one you suspect: if she is a witch she cannot step over it, but will have to go round. There are certain days in the year, notably the first of May, when they go about borrowing; but on no account must you lend them anything, above all neither salt, fire, nor leaven; for if they cross your threshold with any one of these things the cattle will inevitably fall ill or die; and if they carry water out, it is just as bad. However, no witch can harm you if you possess a four-leaved trefoil. Of disembodied spirits perhaps the most grim is the Mürawa, the spirit of some still living being which wanders at night time and will come and sit on

the chest of the sleeper with a weight heavy as lead. There is only one way to keep the Mürawa off—to turn the toes of your shoes away from the bed; then you may go to sleep without misgiving.

Premonitory signs of death occur in many forms: wandering voices that call on the name of the doomed, appearances of those at a distance, and the tickling of the death watch: all these are called *Opokasowanja*. When the cry of an owl is heard round a house, some one will die there before long; and before the death of children the Buzawoscz (God's sorrow), a little woman some two feet high with long hair down her back, is certain to come and moan without. When the dead are buried, it is time to cease excessive lamentation, or they will not be able to rest in peace.

The natives still tell a hundred and

one stories of the "little men," the "water maidens," the Nyx, the Nachtjäger or wild huntsman with the phantom hounds. A few years hence, perhaps, and the Nyx, like Kühleborn and the Erl-king, will only live in the story books; but, meantime, here is a land where they are still believed in. And so for the present the Wends remain, a peculiar people little touched by the hand of change, thirty thousand in these marshes, though that does not by any means include all the Wendish population of Germany. Whoever penetrates the Spreewald, either in the native punt, when the water is lowest in August or September, or in the hard winter, skating his ten and twenty miles from Lübben or Lübbenau over the frozen floods, will find it one of the most interesting countries within reach of the ordinary traveller.

HOPE.

(Suggested by Mr. Watts's picture in the Grosvenor Gallery, 1886.)

IN lonely vigil till the day be born,
Whose one star glimmers pale the clouds among,
She hears the voices of the human throng,
The hopeless murmurs of a world out-worn,
The tumult of immitigable scorn,
The old ancestral cry of mortal wrong,
Sound like the weary burden of a song,
Love loveless left and faithless faith forsworn.
She hears, unheeding. Her self-blinded eyes
Keep still undimmed the glory of the view
Which once was hers, when all the world was new:
Her ears, that catch one strain which never dies,
Hold firm, through chance and change of earth and skies,
Her dumb unswerving faith in Good and True.

VAN DYCK, THE HISTORIAN.

THE title of this paper will suggest what the text will amply prove,—that it makes no pretence to be critical. I have no wish to enlist in that army of martyrs which so few painters call noble. Still, while frankly recognising the indecent folly of any man professing a judgment on pictures who is not himself a painter, it is, I submit, possible (and will hope permissible) for every man, not physically blind, to derive some pleasure from their contemplation—though, no doubt, he were wise to abstain from venturing on reasons for his temerity. It is even possible that this inartistic and inanimate pleasure may be in its way a more unalloyed feeling than that which stirs the finer pulses of your true connoisseur. Many things which make the judicious grieve ruffle not the coarser texture of our minds,—for there must, I take it, be some others in this condition, though they will not own to it. And this is not entirely the same as to say that we admire where we should not—which would, of course, be deplorable. All pictorial art contains two possible sources of pleasure: one supplied by the form, the other by the idea. There are the technical qualities—the drawing, colouring, composition, and so on; and there is the painter's meaning, his design—to give the word its unprofessional sense. The first source is open only to the brotherhood of the pictorial guild—and to an extremely select and fortunate few, of whom each painter will furnish you with his own list; but the other is, or may be, open to all. Happy, of course, is he who can feed his soul from both sources; but, though far be the thought that they who can enjoy the first might, by some cruel freak of Nature, be somewhat less susceptible

to the second, it is not, I trust, rash to assume that the second may be honestly enjoyed by those to whom the first must necessarily be a mystery as unfathomable as the source of sacred Alph.

Another charm, too, may a picture have for these common souls;—yet happy, perchance, who know not their own unhappiness. It may have the charm of association; whether it be roused by the sight of some once familiar scene or face, a dim memory of long ago, yet cherished still through all the displacing years; or be it that more romantic feeling to which, I think, not the dullest of us can be quite insensible as we gaze on the portraits of the famous dead who for us have never lived save in the pages of the history they helped to make. It is this feeling which gives a peculiar charm to those collections of portraits with which the Directors of the Grosvenor Gallery have so greatly helped to brighten these cheerless latter winters—Reynolds's portraits, Gainsborough's, and now Van Dyck's. Artistically, say those who ought to know, a painter's work, the work even of the greatest painter, suffers from being seen like this in the mass; and, without knowing anything, one can understand that this may be so. But he who walks through these galleries with his mind attuned to the proper pitch, and haunted by no artistic fears or fancies, cares for none of these things. It matters nothing to him whether this picture or that show traces of the partnership of some less cunning hand than the master's own—whether some profess to find in it few, possibly even no traces of the master at all: whether there be a far better version in some other gallery. None of these disquieting doubts affect him. For this

happy Gallio the picture is the thing whereby his easy conscience is caught, not the painter. The years roll back, and he walks not among the dead, but the living. Cardinal Newman, when a young Fellow of Oriel, spent a winter with some friends in the Mediterranean. Coasting about the Greek islands, he was haunted with the sense that the men who had fought and fallen so many centuries ago in the long war that has made those waters famous were still alive—as much alive as he and his friends.

'But is their being's history spent and run,
Whose spirits live in awful singleness,
Each in its self-formed sphere of light and
gloom?'

Weaker imaginations than the Cardinal's may get for a short hour some touch of this sense (though luckily for them in less disturbing measure) among the still fresh presentments of these fair women and brave men in their habits as they lived, long as they too have been pacing the shadowy house of Pluto.

For this vagrant fancy Van Dyck, I think, supplies the happiest strolling-ground. He is farther away from us than Reynolds and Gainsborough, and so gives more play for the imagination. His times, too, are more picturesque than theirs, more romantic. And this is not only the effect of distance. There has been no such romantic time for England as the time of the first Charles. Elizabeth's was really much less so, though there are no figures in the later reign to match with those of Shakespeare, of Raleigh, and of Philip Sidney. The great queen's time was one of triumph and the intoxication of triumph: everywhere was the stir of a new life: the long darkness of the winter was past, the spring was at hand. Spring came and passed, and summer followed,—a strange and thunderous summer. The feasting and dancing went on: men planned and laboured, made money and love, and squandered both as usual. But over all brooded the shadow of a coming

storm. The handwriting was on the wall; but few could read it right, and fewer still would heed the interpretation.

Something too must be set down to the sumptuary splendours of the time. There is a touch of truth in Macaulay's sneer, that much of Charles's favour with posterity is due to his rich dress and handsome face—though his conjugal fidelity might possibly be a less stimulating motive to latter-day loyalty. It is hard to wax sentimental over the portrait of a Puritan. Satins and brocades, lace-collars, jewels, and plumed hats—these make the prettiest man on canvas, there is no doubt of it; and across the gulf of two centuries one cannot pry so closely as to ask with Ben Jonson whether all be sweet and sound beneath this brave show. They ruffled it handsomely, too, in the later days. Fair ladies sat, we know, to Reynolds and Gainsborough, and men as brave and splendid. But about those Georgian splendours there was something formal, something even a little clumsy: they lacked the grace, the easy airy magnificence of the Carolan times. These Cavalier dandies were born to magnificence: it was thrust upon their Georgian descendants. Look on those two brothers of the house of Lennox, the young Lords James and Bernard Stuart: or on those other two, brothers-in-law and sworn friends, the Lords Digby and Bedford: or on Philip Herbert, handsome as a young Apollo, by the side of his sister soon to be the wife, and too soon the widow, of the gallant and gifted Carnarvon: or on Newport, whose steel cuirass gives the soldier's touch to his finery. Where will you match these radiant figures among the beaux of a later time? No Sir Plume was ever half so splendid as this young Bedford, in his rose-red gold-laced doublet and scarlet cloak that set off so rarely the handsome insolent face framed in its soft brown curls: of too high deportment, says Clarendon, to have many friends at court—and he looks it.

About those later times, too, and the

men and women who helped to make them what they were, we know so much more: we know, sometimes one is half inclined to think, a little too much. What with all the diaries, correspondences, memoirs, secret histories, and such other treasures from Time's private cabinets as this enquiring century of ours has dusted and set in order for us, we have grown almost painfully wise. The gilded ashes have been shovelled off our Georgian Pompeii, and signs laid bare beneath of a life somewhat coarse and unlovely for all its energy and strength. So it may have been with that earlier life—as we know it certainly was when the Restoration came; but our knowledge of it is not intimate enough for a judgment. Our really intimate knowledge of the social habits, manners and dispositions of our ancestors, as distinct from our knowledge of their conduct of public affairs, begins with the Restoration: before that all is comparatively dark—comparatively, that is to say, with the extremely and perhaps somewhat inconveniently fierce light that beat about thrones later on. Certain figures do, indeed, stand out clear and well-defined enough, thanks to the incomparable portraits of Clarendon,—who could paint a scene, too, in his own stately fashion. In the letters of Baillie the Covenanter again we get glimpses vivid and real enough of certain memorable episodes. "His words," wrote Carlyle, as usual, quite unconsciously limning himself, "flowing-out bubble-bubble, full of zealous broad-based vehemence, can rarely be said to make a picture; though on rare occasions he does pause, and with distinctness, nay with a singular felicity, give some stroke of one." Such a stroke, and much more than a stroke, has he given us in his account of the trial of Strafford. Sir Philip Warwick, and Sir Simon D'Ewes, help us also; and Mrs. Hutchinson and Sir Kenelm Digby; and even in the weary pages of those Dryasdusts against whom Carlyle thundered so fiercely and so ungrate-

fully, in the pages of Whitelocke and Rushworth, and of the myriad pamphleteers of the day, it is possible sometimes to catch a note of the human speech, a glimpse of the human face. But for the real atmosphere, the "very age and body of the time, his form and pressure"—that knowledge which reveals us the man as well as the statesman or the soldier—we get it not, or at best in mean and intermittent measure: not in that full sparkling stream which was set flowing when the May-breezes of the Restoration had thawed the frost of Puritanism. With Pepys, Evelyn, and Grammont begins that delightful line of gossips which has run prattling on with hardly a break to our own day. Pepys at one end of the line, Charles Greville at the other,—and what a play-ground between!

Among these Cavaliers, then, the fancy may rove unfettered. The sentimentalist may idealise at his own free will, and the romantic maid find them all proper men.

But they are not to be admired only for their fine clothes and handsome faces. Like our own dandies of the Crimean days, they could fight as well as dance, these splendid young aristocrats. Both these young Stuarts gave their blood for Charles as prodigally as their elder brother gave his gold—the handsome indolent-looking "Paris," yet loyal and devoted as the best, who, when he could not buy his king's life with his own, laid his master in the grave, and then went to die of a broken heart in a foreign land. Lord Bernard commanded the Royal Guards; the Show Troop, as its fellows half sneeringly called it, till its fiery valour at Edgehill silenced all sneers. At Cropredy Bridge he shared the honours of the day with Cleveland, when Waller had all but surrounded the king's rear-guard. Then a year later his own time came. In the hot fighting on Rownton Heath, when Poyntz had driven Sir Marmaduke Langdale back under the walls of Chester, Lord Bernard (Lord Lichfield then) fell and many a brave captain with him

The great historian of those times has mourned him as "a very faultless young man, of a most gentle, courteous, and affable nature, and of a spirit and courage invincible." Lord John, who fell at Alresford a year earlier, was of a rougher mould, yet not less valued, if less loved than his brother. Each had barely reached his twenty-second year. The gods loved not the other pair so well: the tale of their lives is longer and less heroic. Digby succeeded to his father's new-won earldom of Bristol, and died in his bed in 1676: Bedford lived to be made a duke by William. Each was in his way a noticeable man. Both at first were in opposition; and Bedford, who had been returned to Parliament with Pym as member for Tavistock, and possibly learned strange counsel from that unquiet Gamaliel, actually drew his sword against the king at Edgehill. In the next year he changed sides, together with the Lords Holland and Clare, and rode with Rupert at Newbury. But the Russells, with the one brilliant exception of the hero of La Hogue, were not a fighting race, and this one seems never to have been able quite to determine under which king he should range himself. Washed from side to side (Mr. Froude's words), he was naturally little prized by either. But though he made his peace with the Parliament after Newbury, he would never sit among Cromwell's peers, and was certainly active in helping on the Restoration, as he was afterwards active in putting William on the throne. His brother-in-law, George Digby, went over in the heat of Strafford's trial, and was forthwith sent to the Upper House to save him from the vengeance of the Lower. He was no friend to the Wicked Earl, but he thought the Bill of Attainder good neither in law nor fact. Thence onwards he kept always to the royal side, but did little good either to it or himself. "The prototype of Lord Bolingbroke," said Swift; but Bristol was a weaker man than Bolingbroke,

and, with all his faults and follies, I think an honest one. The most universally odious man in the kingdom, Clarendon has called him. Clarendon had indeed little cause to love him; but in the remarkable character he has given of his mortal enemy—perhaps the most striking instance in all history-writing of justice tempered with discreet severity—the verdict really differs little, if at all, from that passed by two pretty shrewd judges of character on the volatile earl. Sir George Carteret described him to Pepys as a man "of excellent parts, but of no great faith or judgment, and one very easy to get up to great height of preferment, but never able to hold it." And a yet sharper critic, the king himself to wit (so the same authority tells us), said of him that he was a man "able in three years to get himself a fortune in any kingdom in the world, and lose all again in three months."

More of a hero was that round-eyed chubby boy who stands at his mother's side in the large family group that hangs hard by the brothers-in-law. Born in 1629, the son of an ill-fated father, beautiful Francis Villiers (as old Aubrey called him) was destined to a short life and a bloody death; yet both in death and life he was happier than his elder brother, who stands here clasping his mother's hands, that "lord of useless thousands" who was to survive his fortune, fame, and friends, to die at last in circumstances scarce less mean and pitiful than those with which Pope's fancy has surrounded his last hours. Ere his twentieth year was run death found the younger brother, but in a different hour and scene. Lord Francis died, on a summer evening in a lane near Surbiton, holding his own, after his horse had fallen, against six Puritan swords, till the rest of the knaves crept round by the hedge, and slew him from behind. Here, too, is "the young, the lovely, and the brave" of Waller's elegy: Charles Cavendish, with his sweet face, gentle and

womanly as the face of Claverhouse. And he, too, died, scarce older than Villiers, killed "with a thrust under his short-ribs," fighting against Cromwell himself at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire—"a very notable victory" Oliver was pleased to think it; and even Carlyle has grudgingly owned that the brilliant young soldier's death caused a very general sorrow. Almost opposite is the clever, high-bred, yet sensual face of young Killigrew, so like his elder brother Sir William, whom also one finds here, listening to Carew reading, it may be, the pretty lines, "He that loves a rosy cheek," or, possibly, some one of those less convenient fancies the poet occasionally indulged in. Tom Killigrew was no hero, indeed, as Pepys shows him to us; yet he served his king faithfully after his own fashion, and that it was no more seemly one was perhaps not all his own fault. Clarendon, at any rate, thought him "a most hopeful young man"; and he showed himself on one recorded occasion at least a brave and capable soldier.

Not all in this gallant company are conspicuous for their grace and magnificence. Not far from his master, the sad patient face of his standard-bearer, Sir Edmund Verney, looks on us with weary eyes. None carried a heavier heart than he into that cruel war, not Falkland himself nor Sunderland. One of his own sons was in arms against him on the side for which his own conscience told him right and reason were fighting. Yet he had eaten the king's bread for thirty years, and it would have shamed his honour, he said, to desert him in his need. So the royal standard was given into his hand at Nottingham; and death, more welcome than any friend, released him from this and all burdens at Edgehill. Over against him is Sir John Byron, first peer of the name, stern and grim in complete steel, like "some grey crusading knight austere" who had wandered by strange freak of nature into this glittering company; certainly

with none of the beauty of his great poetical descendant. A soldier every inch of him, courts and courtiers were little to his taste; and none of all these brave gentlemen gave stronger proof of his devotion than did he, when not even the dishonour done to his name by a shameless wife could alienate him from the son who thus repayed him for his faith to the father. Rupert is close by him, the one disappointing figure in the collection: a common-place uninteresting face, with nothing about him to recall the dashing cavalry leader, and none of the dignity or comeliness of his father, the last Elector Palatine and husband of the luckless Queen of Hearts, who confronts him from the opposite wall.

But not among the brave soldiers or brilliant dandies does one find the face for which we look most eagerly—faces, rather, for there are two here which divide our curiosity: the faces of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Stafford, and of Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland. A strange, puzzled and puzzling face is Falkland's: a mean little figure, in a sort of Puritanical dress, with no trace of breeding about it, nor, as one is half inclined to say, of intellect. But as one looks, the first sense of disappointment passes, and one sees (or do we only think we see?) the well-loved, well-recorded friend of Clarendon, the "incomparable young man" of one of the noblest tributes affection ever inspired, whose untimely death the best of both sides mourned alike. A part of his friend's eulogy at least we can recognise: the "flowing and obliging gentleness" we see, and the hatred of all passion and uncharitableness. "Martyr of sweetness and light," another has called him. The sweetness is surely there;—but the light? Those curious, searching, melancholy eyes, would look and long for the light: but are they the eyes of one who has found it? There is the fatal stamp of irresolution on the face; and, though against one's will, one cannot but confess that after all

Macaulay's verdict, harsh as it seems, was probably the true one.

But in the other face is no touch of irresolution. On the broad forehead, in the hard cold eyes, the stern unbending mouth, is written *Thorough* for a child to see. This is the very man who looked (so his few friends whispered among themselves on that dark May morning) more like a general marching at the head of his victorious army than a prisoner walking to his death. As that awful shape Panthea saw coming o'er the slow cloud to the call of the chained Prometheus,

"Cruel he looks, but stern and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong."

And yet he did suffer wrong at the hands of the one man of all men who should not have done it. Strafford's death may be justifiable for those who condemned him; but no plea can ever justify Charles's acquiescence in it—not even, as the future proved, that miserable plea that it was needful for his own safety. There are two portraits of Strafford here: both show the same man (it is always so with Van Dyck); but the one in black armour, belonging to Sir Philip Egerton (happy man, for he has surely the most wonderful presentment of humanity ever put on canvass) is the finest. It hangs on the line close to the Duke of Norfolk's famous portrait of Charles, bare-headed, in shining armour, the badge of the Garter slung round his neck, and leading-staff in hand. Strafford is in armour, too, in black armour, sombre and cold as his face. In these two portraits—the weak master and the strong servant—one reads the history of the Civil War. In both one reads, traced in different characters—in too many a face, alas, one reads it—the sentiment which inspired the war and shaped its issue: the sentiment which found utterance in the last words of even the gentle Northampton as he lay beneath his victors' swords on Hopton Heath, "I scorn to ask quarter of such base rogues as you."

There is not time to gossip of the rest: of stately Arundel, patron of all the arts, the father of English *virtuosi*: of crafty, choleric Pembroke, who loved hunting better than fighting, with the Chamberlain's staff in his hand, which he broke over the shoulders of luckless Thomas May, the translator of Lucan—a work, as Clarendon sagely observed, none of the easiest of that kind: of Pope Innocent's nephew, Don Livio Odescalchi, so strangely like the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, as that surprising statesman may have looked when reading his Times on a certain morning last December, and wondering if what he read there had been wisely done: of the grim Spaniard Gondomar, to whom was given the rarest present ever made by an English sovereign to a foreigner—the head of Walter Raleigh: of Newcastle, famous with sword and pen, but who found the Great House easier to manage than Hazlerigg's Lobsters: of gay luxurious Carlisle, famous for his costly banquets and his wife, the "busy stateswoman," the lovely but not too honourable Lucy. And why is she not in this company?—she and her sister (no "sister every way"!) the fair and good and wise Sacharissa?

But in truth the ladies are but sparsely represented here; except the queen, who figures many times, with her husband, with her children, with her dwarf (that famous little man of war, Sir Geoffrey Hudson), and by herself. And such as are here are not made particularly interesting, or particularly fair: rather insipid creatures are they of the Lely type. Perhaps the painter's eye, accustomed to the more glowing beauties of the south (there are two grand Genoese dames in the gallery), was dissatisfied with the white skins and fair hair of the north; though by all accounts the man's eye was well pleased enough with them. It must be remembered also that women had not yet become the powers either socially or politically that they became in Sir Joshua's day.

At any rate, it certainly seems as though Van Dyck had been less interested in painting them than in painting their husbands, brothers—or lovers, as the case may have been. One woman's face here, however, has a strange romantic charm—the face of Venetia, Lady Digby: the fair Venetia and, unless the old gossips lied even more shamelessly than is the wont of their kind (and some say they did) the frail Venetia. She was the wife of Clarendon's friend, Sir Kenelm Digby, that queer man, half-sage, half-charlatan (an "errant mountebank," Evelyn called him), and is recorded by the historian as a lady, "though of extraordinary beauty, of an extraordinary fame." We see her painted here as she was found dead in her bed, the head resting on her right hand, with closed eyes, looking as one who sleeps: her rich brown hair flows from under her laced cap: a string of pearls is round her neck, and one of rare size hangs from her ear. So, wrote Habington,

"She past away,
So sweetly from the world, as if her clay
Laid only down to slumber."

And the man who bequeathed to us all these delightful things is here, too, painted by his own hand: painted as a gorgeous young man on a prancing white charger (a present, it is said, to his master Rubens): painted twice, as a rather grave delicate young man

in sad-coloured raiment: painted last in the guise most familiar to us—in gay clothes, one hand fingering the gold chain that Charles gave him, the other pointing to a sunflower nodding its broad face in front of him. He looks over his right shoulder at us, as though in sly prophetic mood to call our attention to the flower that for one of our many moments of folly was to be emblematic of a phase of what it pleased us to call art. The face shows the character of the man as his contemporaries have recorded it—keen, clever, restless, refined, loving his art, yet loving his pleasures also only too well. A man to whom a magnificent manner of life was a necessity, as became the favourite pupil of Rubens. It is sad to think that his last days were darkened by trouble and sickness and poverty: that this gay brilliant creature should have gone down before his time to the grave not all in honour. Sir Joshua, looking at Van Dyck's great altar-piece in the church of the Recollets in Mechlin, pronounced it to be one of the first pictures in the world, and mourned that his genius had been led away to portraits from "history-painting." This is a regret Englishmen will hardly share; for as they look round these wonderful walls they must own that for them, at least, this is the true history-painting.

THE STRANGE STORY OF MARGARET BEAUCHAMP.

BY GEORGE FLEMING.

PART II.

I ONLY saw Miss Beauchamp once in all the week which followed my confession. Little Mabel had been threatened with a return of the fever, and, day or night, her sister never left her side. Stanleigh himself saw her but for a few minutes at a time. Morning and evening she would come for a quarter of an hour or so and take a turn with him in the garden.

Once, as I was waiting in the darkened hall to hear news of my little playfellow, I saw Margaret pass. She was coming down the broad stair with her hand on the banister, dressed in black, with the heavy hair pushed carelessly away from her forehead: on her face was an expression of tragic, speechless endurance, such as I shall never forget. Years afterwards, on the walls of the Salon, I saw a picture by a great French painter, a picture of Marie Antoinette on her way to the scaffold, and it wore the face of Margaret Beauchamp as she passed me that day. She passed so near to me that the folds of her dress swept against my foot; but she did not notice my presence, and I crept away as if by merely looking at her I had done her a wrong.

On the Sunday afternoon, all the bells ringing for afternoon service, Forbes came in and handed me a note. It was the only time she ever wrote to me. Just a few words to say that Mabel was better, much better, and longing to see me. Would I come? And she signed herself, "Your friend, Margaret Beauchamp."

I threw the book I was trying to read down upon the table, and sprang to my feet.

"You are going, then?" Forbes

said; and before I could answer he added, "the child is better now: entirely out of danger. But they have had a bad time of it all the week."

At the prospect of seeing her once more I felt my heart beat and expand with a sympathy which was ready to include all the universe. "I have been so very sorry for you too, old chap," I said.

Forbes gave a queer little laugh. "I am of Aristotle's opinion," he said drily. "A white thing that lasts a long while is no whiter than what lasts but a day. The chief wisdom of man consists in appreciating to the full the quality of whiteness while it lasts. Yes—while it does last!"

He was standing in the middle of the room with his hat on his head, and he continued to watch me with the same provoking, patronising smile. "Go, dear boy! You must not keep little Mabel waiting."

At another time I might have felt inclined to resent such a tone; but then I was simply too happy to care. It was a cloudless afternoon. I made my way as best I might along the Parade, through the devious files of church-goers. There was an air of peace, a sort of Sunday calm and well-being upon all the placid faces. I passed whole family groups, the children in their finery walking soberly in front; and, as I reached the Beauchamps, Billy, with Tottie at his heels, came bounding out to meet me. The very footman who opened the door had a smile and a word of subdued rejoicing.

I ran lightly up the stairs. Mabel had been moved into another room that day, and I found her lying, muffled up in shawls, on a sofa drawn close to the bow-window. Her small

face looked smaller, whiter, more determined than ever; but she greeted me with her sister's own smile.

"Now we can be happy—just we three," she said, in a weak little thread of a voice.

She made me sit down beside her and give her my hand to hold. "Sister Margaret will sit on the other side and take my other hand in hers, because we are all friends: we are three friends, are we not, Margaret?"

"Yes, darling. But you remember what you promised."

"Oh! I am not to excite myself, I know. I am to eat whatever is given me, and not to excite myself. Oh, I have so much experience with doctors, you see," she explained with a perfect gravity.

At a sign from Miss Beauchamp I took up a book of fairy tales which was lying open upon the table, and began reading one of them aloud. After a very little time the child dropped asleep. I looked across at Margaret. Her eyes were fixed upon the open window and the flat shining plain of sea. I could study her face unobserved. In that short week it seemed as if half the youth had gone out of it.

Presently she turned her head a little and her sad eyes met mine. "If you had not come to-day," she said in a very low voice, "if Mabel had not sent for you, I should have sent for you to-morrow. I have been trying—to do without help—but—"

A dark crimson spot burned and flickered out upon her pale cheek. She bit her under-lip hard, and then threw back her head again with something of the old defiant grace. "Mr. Balfour, I want you to answer me seriously, please. Do I impress you as a person who is likely to become insane; the victim of an—an hallucination?"

"Good heavens, Miss Beauchamp—"

"Hush! Oh, please hush! Whatever I say you are not to awaken Mabel. If you want to help me at all you must promise to be very quiet

and listen. And first you must answer my question. You are going to be a doctor: in such a matter as this you ought to understand. Am I, Mr. Balfour?"—she kept her great desperate eyes riveted upon my face—"am I, to the best of your knowledge and belief, the kind of person who is likely to suffer from—from—what shall I say?—from visions called up by a diseased, an over-excited imagination?"

"Miss Beauchamp, I am more ignorant than you think. But to the best of my knowledge and belief you are the very last person in the world who would be subject to such—to such phantasmagoria. You have not the temperament for it: you have an unusually clear mind: you are in perfect health. I beg of you, I entreat you, not to distress yourself with such an absurd—forgive me!—with such a cruelly absurd impossibility."

"Then you would accept any statement I made—anything, you understand, however improbable—as the reliable evidence of a sane person?"

"Anything. Upon my honour!"

"Ah!" She let her head fall against the back of her tall chair with a slow gesture of utter discouragement. There was silence between us for a full minute, only broken by the soft breathing of the sleeping child. Some footsteps passed close under the window, and I heard voices, a girl's light laugh: then Margaret spoke.

"Do you remember," she said, "that Stanleigh came to see us the first evening that we spent here? I see that you do. But perhaps you have forgotten that it was a particularly bright, clear night. After he had gone—and we sat a long time in the garden—I went directly to my room. I was not very tired. I felt almost too happy to go to sleep, yet I did. I fell asleep directly. Some time in the night—I cannot tell you what time it was, but the moon was shining full into my room—I woke suddenly, with the feeling that there was something, *something*, near me. I am not nervous, naturally, Mr. Balfour. I sat up

and looked all about the room. The window was wide open, and where the moonlight fell clear upon the white wall, I saw, I felt, the passing of a shadow; yet not a shadow—something more elusive, transparent, indefinite—like the ring about one's breath on a piece of looking-glass. It was not enough even to startle me. I think I was only curious. I looked, and while I was looking, I seemed to feel—there, on my wrist—the faintest possible pressure of something light and cool. I was not frightened—I tell you I was not frightened—only curious. In the morning I had forgotten the whole thing, like a dream. In any case I should not have thought of speaking of it before the children. But three days after the same thing happened again, only it was all more vivid, more coherent, the shadow and the touch on my arm. I got up that time, and meant to ring my bell and waken Parker. I could not do it, Mr. Balfour, I could not. When I was a child my uncle took me once to see the working of a galvanic battery. They made me put my hands upon some knobs and I could not take them away. Something outside of me, something which made me sleepy, held them fast. Well, this was the same thing over again. I had no power to move, no will. I threw myself down on my bed again, and when I woke it was bright morning, and Mabel was knocking at the door. Since then—

For the first time since she began speaking she lifted her great tragic eyes to mine. She leaned forward in the dusk and laid her little hot hand upon my wrist tremulously: "It comes," she said; "last night—It was here!"

The comprehension of what she had borne, of what in all these days and nights of silence she had suffered, pierced me to the heart with a sickening stab of pain.

"But why," I said, "why have you not asked any one before to help you?"

"I cannot tell Stanleigh!"

I felt the shudder that ran through her from head to foot.

"But, Miss Beauchamp—"

"I cannot! Don't ask me why. I cannot! I cannot!" she repeated in the same wild, hushed whisper. And then, after a long pause, "Oh, do not blame me! I have tried, and It—It comes between us. It will not let me. All about me I feel danger: danger to us both, to him and to me. I feel it! Oh, I have borne it as long as I could, and to-day I could not! It—It is getting so much plainer, Mr. Balfour: so much less like a shadow, that it frightens me. Ah, it frightens me!" she said, with a little piteous catch in her voice.

"Good God!"

We sat for a minute or two with clasped hands like two frightened children: through the silence little Mabel's breath went and came in the divine security of sleep.

Then she said, "I have your promise that you will not tell Stanleigh?"

"Ah!" I cried, "you must give me time! I must think. I must help you. There are a thousand ways to rid you of this horror: only give me time to think! Above all, we need proof."

At that moment the lamp-lighter, whistling as he tramped his round, halted under the window and touched the street-lamp to flame. The light streamed in full on the gay embroidered coverlet and the little motionless figure.

"Mr. Balfour," Margaret said in a strange voice, "I cannot move my other hand without awakening Mabel. Will you unclasp that bracelet for me and—and look—"

I did as she bade me, and I saw—ah! merciful Heaven, it was no illusion, *I saw it*, on either side of her wrist, under the gold, three dull red stains, the clutch of some unspeakable thing upon her shrinking flesh!

She leaned nearer: she whispered: I could hardly hear what she was saying:—

"And last night, Mr. Balfour, and

once before. Ah, I know now that It can see : *It has begun to look at me.*"

The morning found me still under the same confusing impression of horror and bewilderment ; yet, so far as Margaret's action was concerned, I believed myself to have hit upon the only satisfactory expedient for deliverance. As soon as I thought there was a chance of finding any one up, I started on my way to the Beauchamps.

It was a radiant morning : cool, transparent sky arching illimitably over the blue sea-plain. At the horizon a procession of white-sailed fishing boats stood steadily away from shore : the chalky curve of cliff, sparkling in the early sunlight, seemed to repeat and heighten that joyous note of pure white. At that hour I was the solitary possessor of all the wide Parade. A few belated housemaids, intent on finishing their daily task of cleaning doorsteps, paused over their scrubbing to stare after me as I passed. A tidy, healthy-looking girl was just putting together her pails and brushes before the Beauchamps' hall-door. She wished me a civil good-morning, addressing me by name ; and then, as she opened the door for me, "There is no one down yet, sir, I think, but Miss Margaret. If you please, sir, I saw her in the young ladies' morning-room, sir, as I was coming down stairs." The judgment of the servants' hall was eloquent in the very way in which she lifted aside her pail for me to pass.

I found Margaret waiting for me beside the open window. There was a new colour on her cheek, a new light of hope and expectation in her eye.

"Ah !" she cried, turning swiftly about, and holding out both her hands, "you bring me help ! I know—I feel it, I see it in your face ! You bring me courage !"

"I have brought you the answer," I said : standing there before her, her new loveliness made a sort of desperate coward of me. I dared not hesitate : I could not stop to discriminate phrases : I threw my conclusions, as it were, pell-mell at her feet.

"Miss Beauchamp," I said, "there is only one course for you to take, and you must—I entreat you to adopt it immediately. You have done me the honour to consult me : well, this is my answer,—you must leave this house. You must leave all this accursed horror behind you. I won't reason with you as to what it is—I won't say it is your fancy. It doesn't matter :—only leave it. Tell Stanleigh to take you away. Marry him at once. Let him take you away from us all—and take care of you—" the words choked me, and I repeated them with a sort of bitter satisfaction in my own pain. "Let Stanleigh marry you, and take you away from us," I said.

A deeper, lovelier rose flushed in her face, as she said unsteadily, "It is impossible. I cannot—I dare not tell him."

"But what—what are you afraid of then ?" I urged.

"Ah !—" She drew in her breath with a sort of long, shuddering sigh. She sat down beside the table and put her two elbows upon it, and hid her face in her hands. "It is coming between us. It has come ! And yet I cannot tell him : I cannot, I cannot !"

I looked at her bowed figure with a sudden flash of inspiration. "Heaven help us !" I cried, "you are afraid not for yourself but for him !"

Billy had come clattering down the stairs and out into the garden while we stood there talking. Now I heard him scrambling up beneath the window. A little brown head slowly appeared above the window-ledge : his round bright eyes went swiftly wandering about the room. "I heard voices. Halloa, Margaret, is that you ? I thought it was the servants, and I should catch old Parker up to some of her tricks. I say, Balfour, you are an early customer, and no mistake !"

I moved and stood in front of his sister. "My dear boy, it is high time some one set you a good example."

"Oh, I dare say ! And I suppose you picked up your taste for early

rising at school. But I say, Madge, I can't hold on here much longer. Just catch hold of Tottie, will you? The little beggar will run after me over the wet grass, and aunt will be in such a wax if he wets his precious feeties."

He dropped the dog into the room very gently and cleverly with one hand, and disappeared once more into the garden.

"Poor Tottie!" Margaret said mechanically, and stooped to smooth the little creature's ruffled curls. But as she put her hand near him, the little brute drew himself up, stiffened all over, and began to tremble violently: then slowly, step by step, he dragged himself backward out of her reach, until he disappeared, whimpering, beneath the cover of the sofa. "You see," said Margaret, very bitterly.

She got up from her chair, walked over to the window, and then, coming back to her place by the table, she suddenly put both hands before her face and burst into a passionate fit of tears.

I waited until she had wept herself into comparative quiet. I could see the convulsive movement of her shoulders under the delicate summer gown that she wore, and each stifled sob seemed to burst and tear at my own breast. When she was quieter, "Dear Margaret," I said, "be brave! You have been so good, so noble, so patient: only be brave a little longer. Don't break down now. I will say nothing to Stanleigh, I promise you. When he comes, tell him everything or nothing, as you like. Only make him take you away from here at once. There is no reason—there need be no delay about your marriage."

I went a step nearer and laid my hand on the table beside hers.

"You are so generous," I said, "I think if you reflect a little you will understand what your suffering costs me. I would not speak of myself if I knew better how to persuade you. But, if not for your own sake, yet I think you will put an end to this to— to spare your friend."

"Ah, my friend!" she echoed through her sobbing. For an instant she laid her hand, her poor little disfigured hand, upon mine. More than thirty years have passed since that morning, and nothing has effaced in me the memory of her touch, the ring of her voice as she spoke.

I left her as all the house was beginning to awaken. I would not go back to our lodgings. I had no shadow of reason to avoid Forbes, and yet the very idea of meeting him filled me with a sort of curious repugnance. I breakfasted somewhere in the town; and then wandered about aimlessly, making a point of speaking to as many people as I could. About three o'clock, I found myself sitting on the shady side of the pier, the centre of a group of idle good-for-nothing sailors and longshore men. Mere reprobates, lazy hangers-on to life's fringe as they were, I was yet thankful to them for giving me a firmer sense of reality: their coarse appreciation of the chance pleasures of existence made the world seem more possible. My nerves ached with the pressure: I sickened for the familiarities and securities of every day.

As we lounged in the shadow of the great pile of stone, they filled their afternoon pipes more leisurely with tobacco of my providing, and one after another each hoary mariner uplifted his voice in tales of dubious worth. It was in the very midst of one of these fallacious histories that I sprang abruptly to my feet.

"Oh, yes, they will go away together and that will be the end of it!" I cried out, in very mockery of my thoughts.

I left my late companions speechless with mingled wrath and confusion of spirit, and, like an arrow shot from the bow, I sped away to the Beauchamps' house upon the cliff. During the last three weeks we had been accustomed to go in and out there at our will; but with my hand on the bell, I remembered the termination of my morning visit. Instead of ringing, I

turned aside and forced my way through the overgrown laurels.

At the farther end of the garden, I stumbled upon a clear spot of turf and threw myself down upon it to wait—I did not myself know for what—unhinged, wearied beyond expression. I had not sat ten minutes in that cool green shade before I fell asleep.

I was wakened by the sound of voices close beside me. For a moment they mingled vaguely, uneasily with my dream: then it was my own name caught my ear. "Jealous? and of Will Balfour?" I heard Forbes's voice repeating. Then I heard him give a little laugh. "Pardon me, Margaret, if I remind you that such a suggestion could only wrong yourself—or me!"

"Ah, Stanleigh! You are cruel!" she answered quickly. Her voice had a tremble in it like the quivering of a wounded creature.

They had halted not ten paces from me; where the broad gravelled walk ended beside an old pear tree, the oldest in the garden, propped up by iron supports, and girded about its trunk with a circular wooden bench. I had not had the wit to move away at the first, and while I hesitated Margaret spoke again: she made my showing myself an impossibility.

"Stanleigh, it is not a question of any one but you and me." She turned and clung to him suddenly. "Oh, it is cruel to force me to repeat it! Yet you love me—forget that I am speaking. It is not I who ask: it is your own love that expects it." She bowed her head until it rested against his arm, on her clasped hands. "Stanleigh, I want you to marry me: to marry me and take me away from here," she said.

There followed a full minute of complete silence. Twice I saw Forbes lift his head as if about to speak, but no sound came. Then her hands dropped to her side: she shrank away from him slowly, with averted face. "Ah" she cried, "and you have forgotten—already!" It was the

summing up of all unspoken and unspeakable reproach.

"You excite yourself," said Forbes; "and I can assure you that I have forgotten nothing—nothing!"

He took her by the hand and made her seat herself beside him on the moss-grown bench. "You do me the honour of suggesting that we should no longer delay our marriage. I can only remind you of your own former determination to await the very last day of the period set by Sir John. You give me no new reason. It seems to me it is not I who—forget."

"And if I answer you, Stanleigh, that I have reasons, sufficient reasons, which I cannot—which I may never tell you? If I answer you that, what then? But oh, my own," she said, "my own—that you should ask me to give reasons for our love!"

Stanleigh's eye shifted uneasily. "It is you who are cruel now, Margaret. But those reasons: I am not a child!"

"It has come between us at last. At last! You do not love me, Stanleigh."

His face darkened. He looked weary, harassed. His lips set close: with that expression he looked dangerous.

"I have told you, Margaret, that I am not a child. Am I then so unreasonable?" he asked bitterly. "After all I ask only for a divided trust. For no doubt you have taken Mr. Balfour into your confidence."

"Yes."

Her voice was toneless as if she hardly heard herself speak. She gave a long hopeless sort of sigh; and then with a sudden, swift movement she slipped to the ground, kneeling on the weedy turf, her arms about his neck, her head resting on his breast.

"I ask you to marry me, love, and yet what security have I? If you will not love me, you will not trust me now—what security is there for all the years to be? Yet I will tell you all you ask of me. If there is only one will between us, let

it be yours. Have your own way: be master, Stanleigh." She pressed her cheek closer against him with a gesture of infinite appeal. "Do you remember that day we rode through Dimmock Wood together?" her sad voice grew suddenly fluent, resonant with the music of a great love. "I think that you would have died for me—for the touch of my hand, that day—if I had asked you, Stanleigh. And now—Ah, don't move," she said, "don't take your arm away. I will tell you all, Stanleigh, and then—happen what will! if only it is not to you!"

I could bear no more. Whether they were aware of my presence or not, seemed now the smallest matter. I plunged straight through the crowding laurels. In five minutes I had gained the gate: I had left that pleading, maddening voice behind me: I had reached the friendly commonplace of the street.

Between ten and eleven that same night Forbes walked into my room. He had been dining at the Beauchamps, but to my surprise I saw that he had changed his evening dress and wore a rough morning-coat. I got up as he came in, and we stood looking at one another across the table.

"My dear Balfour," he began, "I have a request to make and an apology to offer you. Let us begin with the more important first. I have been grossly unjust both to you and to Margaret: I mention her name because I am aware that you know of it already. And I ask your pardon."

"I fell in love with her," I answered calmly, "when I saw her step out of the railway-carriage at the station. She holds me, you know, about one degree less important than Billy. I don't see why you should not be told of it, or why you should not have seen it long ago for yourself. It was plain enough."

"Ay, plain enough!" he echoed with a laugh.

He tapped with his finger-tips absently for a minute upon the gaudy

table-cover, the burning candles lighting up his face. "By Jove!" he cried, "I believed myself to be a fine fellow, but you have shamed me." He stretched out his hand with the gesture of a prince. "Think of me what you like. Yet I thank you for the lesson: for the sake of old friendship, I thank you."

"I was there," I retorted, "this afternoon, under that tree. How can I touch your hand?"

His forehead flushed all over, but he controlled himself with an effort. "As you please. Yet I spoke in the name of an old kindness." He thrust his hands into the pockets of his shooting-coat. "You have half sickened me of speaking. I came in here prepared to offer you what reparation lies in my power. She has told me everything, and to-night I intend to sit up and watch in their garden. She has been made, I am convinced, the victim of some infernal trick. The night is warm and still: I came here to ask you to watch with me."

There was only one answer possible. I looked for my hat on the chair where I had tossed it. "I am ready whenever you care to lead the way."

"You had better take a plaid with you, or a top-coat. It will be chill enough before daybreak," Forbes added drily.

All the familiar way up the hill we paced in silence side by side, and my heart smote me for the rejected proffer of his hand. The light white mist which enveloped us the instant we stepped into the cool outer air, the great silence of the night, the low wash and murmur of the sea, brought each its measure of sanity and healing indifference. I glanced twice or thrice inquiringly at my companion, but some devil of pride held us both silent.

As we turned into the Beauchamps' garden by the little side-gate, some clock in the house struck the half hour after eleven. It was, as Forbes said, a very warm, still night; but the fine weather of the last three weeks seemed

on the point of breaking. The air was full of an impalpable haze, which, as the red and laggard moon rose higher, filled all the spaces between the trees with a sort of luminous whiteness. You could see plainly, and you could not. At twenty paces distance the laurel-bushes loomed like trees. There were no lights burning on that side of the big, silent house, which looked at once so strange and so familiar. In the garden, too, all was still: the thread of water trickled steadily into its basin: now and then a bird whistled, or something rustled lightly in the dark, motionless trees—that was all.

For a long time Forbes continued his monotonous pacing up and down like a sentinel: the wet gravel sparkled in the moonlight, and at regular intervals his shadow moved across it, and his deliberate footstep crushed the loose stones. As he was taking perhaps his fiftieth turn, I got up from my seat by the old sun-dial and joined him.

"Won't you sit down for a bit? I can take your place."

"I am not tired," he said briefly.

"Look here, Forbes."

"Well?"

"Oh, you may be as confoundedly superior as you please, but—there are some things I could find it in my heart to say I shall never forgive you, and yet— Confound it all! There,—I wish you would shake hands."

He laughed; but I went back to my seat a little comforted. Presently he came and sat down beside me at the opposite end of the bench. He leaned his back against a tree, and I could see his upturned profile dark against the sky. We were neither of us inclined to speak. For my part, I tried with all my might to banish the very thought of Margaret. Her face kept rising up before me—her face as I had last seen it. If I shut my eyes and listened to the fountain it was worse: I saw her then as when we rode the downs together—a mocking vision, smiling, rose-flushed.

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All this time Forbes never said a word. The night grew full of faint, uncertain sounds: rustlings in the grass—an unripe apple dropping in the orchard with the echo of a step. In the house, a clock kept striking the quarters and the half hours. As the moon set, the light changed without seeming to diminish. About half-past two we heard a cock crow from the other side of the wall; then after a very long interval, another answered; then half-a-dozen. From this shut-in garden we could see the zenith of the arching sky grow bluer, colder: the stars were extinguished one by one while the eye was yet fixed upon them. A sudden wind stirred in the tree-tops: the garden-scents were overcome by a thrill of salt air from the sea.

"It is dawn," said Forbes, rising and stretching out his cramped arms.

As at a given signal, the birds began twittering and piping from every crotch and angle of the branches. The roses, which all night long had looked like dark round spots sprinkling the bushes, now began royally to re-assert their presence, showing scarlet and white and dusky red.

"So that is over, and nothing gained," he said half regretfully. He went up to the dripping fountain and dipped his hands into its mossy basin, and dashed the ice-cold water over his face and hair.

"Ah!—look!" I cried out.

The shutters of Margaret's window were pushed gently open, slowly, as if yielding to the pressure of a deliberate hand.

"She has not slept either, poor child!" Forbes murmured with a sudden flash of tenderness.

He stepped out into the middle of the cleared space before the dial. "Four o'clock of a July morning, and all's well!" he called out in a long musical note.

I half hoped that she would show herself; but there was no answer. The sun climbing well up in the clear, empty sky shone full at last above the

matted tree-tops, flooding all the fresh quiet of the garden, the blank silent house. That silence began to trouble me.

"Do call out again. Say something to show her we are here," I said to Forbes.

He looked at me with an odd expression and answered nothing. After a moment he stooped and broke off a handful of dewy roses. "It will serve for a fair good-morrow, a Troubadour's greeting to the lady of his dreams," he said with a sort of mocking tenderness, and tossed the bunch of flowers through Margaret's open window. He stood with upturned face looking after them: the fatigues of a watchful night had left not a trace on his superb physique: he was fresh and vigorous as the morning.

We saw the roses fall fairly into the room. There was no answer. Again we stood facing one another, silent.

The clock in the house struck sharply on the half hour. "She said that she, too, would be waking," he muttered, half to himself. He turned once more and looked at the house, scanning the blank line of windows. "Come on!" he said impatiently. We made the circuit of the place half running, and then a very obvious difficulty brought us up standing: the doors were all locked.

"Shall I ring?" I asked breathlessly.

"Yes—no. The servants will be in bed. They won't hear you." We went back into the garden. Margaret's window was still flung wide open. The sunshine poured into the room. All at once I remembered Billy. "Hold on, Forbes. I think those lower windows can be made to open." I swung myself up on the ledge and all the panes rattled as I shook them. "Come on, now—just another push; so—gently now—together!" The slight bolt gave way with a rattle of broken glass on the gravel.

"I hope we sha'n't frighten all the women into fits: it's a clear case of

burglary with violence," Forbes said under his breath, swinging himself down into the room. But neither of us felt the least inclined to smile. We stepped cautiously up the broad carpeted stair: the house was marvellously still, and the air felt dead and close after the garden. Forbes led the way to a door on the second landing, where he paused and knocked gently. "Parker! wake up, Parker!"

At the third or fourth summons a sleepy voice called out; "Who is there? Go away. What's the matter?"

"It is I, Mr. Forbes; and Mr. Balfour is with me. Don't be frightened, but look sharp, there's a good woman, and open your door."

We waited for a minute or two. On the floor beneath us Tottie began shrilly barking. Then the key turned with a rattle in the lock, the door was set ajar, and Parker's face appeared in the opening—her sober face swollen, flushed, and unrecognisable with sleep.

"For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, what is it? Oh, sir, don't say Miss Mabel is took worse?"

"Look here, Mrs. Parker, I want you to go to Miss Margaret's room and wake her. Wake her, do you hear? And then say it was I who sent you."

"Oh, gentlemen!" the woman said drawing back, much affronted, "if it is all for a silly joke that you wakened me—and me making no doubt that at least it was illness in the house."

She would have shut the door in our faces, but Forbes caught her by the arm. "Do as I tell you. You don't know what you are talking about," he said imperatively. "Your dress! Oh, confound your dress! No, never mind, there's a good soul—you can settle your dress as you come back."

He half led, half dragged her to the top of the stairs. "There—go quick—oh, never mind arguing—go!"

We heard her unwilling footsteps shuffle down the stairs and along the hall. She paused before Margaret's door: we could hear her knocking: for

a minute or two only Tottie's sharp, wiry yelp answered.

Then the woman gave a call of distress. Some panic had seized her; as we ran down the stairs we could hear her rattling at the lock.

"Oh, sir—oh, Mr. Balfour—if this is some trick! Oh, I should never believe any one could treat me so! And she sleeps so light—Miss Margaret! it's me—Parker—oh, pray open the door, Miss Margaret!"

I had got my shoulder against the lock but Forbes pushed me aside roughly. "Stand back—all of you. It's *my* place," he said. His lips were as white as death, but his eyes blazed like the eyes of a madman. He braced himself against the angle of the wall: there was a splintering sound of wood—and the middle panel cracked across the bottom. He tore off one of the pieces, put in his hand and unlocked the door.

There, stretched out on a couch near the window, in the white gown I had seen her wearing, lay Margaret.

Forbes walked straight up to her. "Oh, God!" he cried out in a high, unnatural voice, "Oh, God—Balfour!"

When we found her she must have been dead for some hours. On either side of her throat were two dull red marks, like bruises, exactly like the marks on her wrist, as we ascertained when we compared them afterwards. There was no sign of any struggle about her, no violence. Her eyes were open: there was a half-smile on her lips: she lay high on the pillows, as if watching us. One hand rested on her breast, the other arm, with the bracelet still on her wrist, hung straight down by her side, and on the floor, within an inch of the dead fingers, lay Forbes' roses, as they fell.

I do not pretend to have given this story precisely in Sir William's own language; yet many of the remarks are textually his own. I particularly

remember the words in which he described the dead girl to us.

When he had finished, there was a little silence; nobody ventured on a comment. At last the Boy moved his elbows off the table. "By Jove!" he said, sitting up, and drawing a deep breath.

"For a long while after that," Sir William added, "or it seemed a long while then, Forbes and I saw very little of each other. I travelled, and then took up my profession in good earnest. I thought I should never learn to endure further association with the man whom I could not but consider, to a certain extent, responsible for her death. For if she had obeyed her own strenuous instinct—if she had never told him; and yet, who knows? who can answer such a question? Slowly, slowly, I took hold again of life. For Nature, gentlemen, is the great, insidious, indefatigable enemy of our griefs: suffering is sterile, and she will not let men suffer. She lures us back, reclaims us, forces us back, if need be; and the first time after any overwhelming wreck of passion that we are conscious of the grateful warmth of the sun, the falling rain, hunger, thirst, fatigue, life has already taken repossession. A man may struggle, gentlemen: Nature can wait."

He pushed aside his empty glass and leaned back in the old leather chair.

"You must have heard of Stanleigh Forbes and his political successes. He wrote to me on the occasion of his marriage, and after that I saw him often. His wife is a distant connection of old Sir John's: the Beauchamp family interest has always been faithful to him. Next year I expect one of his sons to come to me. The lad has talent, and I offered to take him and teach him what I can: had things gone differently it might have been Margaret's boy."

CHING-KI-FU AND THE CRISIS.

I AM an early riser, and generally get to my morning papers by a little after nine o'clock. But as I always take them up in the order of their reputation as purveyors of early and exclusive intelligence, it was not till after eleven o'clock on the 23rd of December that I discovered that Lord Randolph Churchill had resigned. Ching-Ki-Fu was due at twelve, and it at once occurred to me that this startling incident and its results would, in all likelihood, afford a unique opportunity for giving my pupil a clearer insight into the working of our political institutions than he could obtain in any other way. He was making fair progress with the language, though his tendency to lapse at times into pigeon-English, which he had unfortunately picked up during a year's sojourn at Hong-Kong before visiting this country, had not yet quite disappeared; and it seemed to me to be about time to start him on the other "subject" which he wished to master before presenting himself for his seventeenth examination (for although he had reached his twenty-second year, he had got no further than this) ere he returned to his native land. I decided, on reflection, that if the exercise I had set him on the occasion of the last hour with me proved satisfactory, I would put him into "politics" at once.

Just as I had arrived at this resolution, my pupil appeared; and after the exchange of our usual salutations, I asked him for his exercise, which he produced from some mysterious recess in his costume, and laid on the table before me. It was an exercise which I had given him as much, I am afraid, to practise myself in his language as to instruct him in mine. I had thrown the first fifty lines of the *Æneid*

roughly into Chinese, and had set him to translate them back into English, to see what sort of job he would make of it. On the whole it was fairly done; not perhaps with quite the force and elegance of a Conington, but still with reasonable correctness, and in a sufficiently literary style. I met with only one or two slight outbreaks of pigeon-English,—such as his version of *Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?* which he had proposed to render, "What fo' Joss makee such dam bob-bely?"

Altogether I thought he was proficient enough in our language to be ripe for the study of our institutions, and I accordingly plunged at once into the subject by informing him that "a Ministerial crisis had occurred." These words, as I had expected, conveyed no idea whatever to his mind; and I proceeded as my custom was, to make him pronounce them after me several times before I attempted to explain their meaning. When he could articulate "Ministerial clisis" tolerably plainly, I set to work to define the terms; but found to my surprise a considerable difficulty in doing so. "Ministerial" was plain sailing enough. He had indeed very distinct conceptions on the subject of officialism and official persons. But "clisis" bothered him, as, to tell the truth, it did me. I looked out *κρίσις* in my 'Liddell and Scott,' and found myself embarrassed with the choice between the various meanings of "a separating or putting asunder," "a deciding or determining," "a judgment or trial," "a dispute or quarrel," "the event or issue of a thing," and "the turning-point of a disease." Nearly every one of these meanings might be made, it seemed to me, to fit Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation. It was beyond question

"a separating or putting asunder" of the Cabinet: it arose out of a "dispute or quarrel" on causes variously assigned: it was distinctly "a trial," and the Radicals said, "a judgment;" while many of the old Tories would, I suspected, describe it as the natural "event or issue" of constructing a Cabinet which numbered Lord Randolph among its members. On reflection, however, I came with little doubt to the conclusion that the last of the meanings assigned to it by the lexicographers was the one intended to be suggested in the political employment of the word; and I proceeded to explain to my pupil that the Government were, figuratively speaking, in the condition of a sick man at "the turning-point of his malady."

I think he might have been got to grasp this idea more easily than he did if I had been more careful not to mix my metaphors. But unfortunately I had felt bound, as a good Conservative, to describe the retirement of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer as an act of political suicide; and Ching, having once got it into his head that Lord Randolph was the dead man, was unable to see how the Cabinet could suffer by his removal. They ought even, he argued, to be the stronger and healthier for it.

"S'posey," he said (his English always became less literary when he grew excited), "s'posey my catchee spoilum t'his piecee arm" (extending it). "S'posey muchee muchee spoilum: s'posey my velly much 'flaid get chop-chop die-lo. My talkee 'Tákta, makee cuttee so-fash." And he imitated the motion of severing the arm from the body.

Of course I could have demolished the analogical basis of this argument by comparing Lord Randolph Churchill's functions in the House of Commons to those of the head rather than of the arm, and suggesting that decapitation was not a recognised process of surgery; but I could not make an admission so damaging to my party, and, although I sighed to

think that Radicals should have the monopoly of it, I refrained. This self-restraint, however, necessitated my entering more fully into the general political situation, and endeavouring thus to make him understand how the event which he fallaciously supposed to be a source of strength to the Government had, in fact, reduced them to the position of a sick man at "the turning-point of his disease."

To do this, it was necessary to recount to him as briefly as I could the history of the Home Rule Bill in the last Parliament. Ching had no great difficulty in understanding what the Union was, nor in correctly estimating the moral and political turpitude of the legislative attempt (as I explained it to him) to dismember the United Kingdom. But he asked so many puzzled questions about the action of her Majesty in the matter that I thought it best, though it went rather against my political conscience, to prevent further confusion by telling him roundly that the real sovereign of the country was the People. It was to them, I told him, that the question of Separation had ultimately to be referred. He listened with the deepest interest to my narrative of the general election, and of the condemnation which the Sovereign People had pronounced on the policy of the late Prime Minister. But when I reached this point he stopped me in my recital, and inquired with an air of the liveliest curiosity whether any of Mr. Gladstone's family were still living.

Not at once perceiving the drift of this question, I replied with some surprise that to the best of my knowledge they were all living. Upon this Ching-Ki-Fu, who, as I had already discovered, had been considerably bitten with Western Liberalism and humanitarianism during his residence in Hong Kong, and indeed was rather rallied by his countrymen on his pretension to enlightenment, expressed the warmest satisfaction. He had for some

time, he said, felt sensible of the injustice of confounding the innocent with the guilty; and, much as he preferred the institutions of his own country to those of ours, he did not scruple to confess his regret that when it became necessary to behead a Chinese minister for a political blunder it should so often be, he could not but think erroneously, deemed advisable to strengthen the force of the example by putting his family to death along with him. But nevertheless, he said, I must have grossly exaggerated the enormity of the late Prime Minister's misconduct. If he were so wicked, argued Ching, we should already have punished him. "You talkee he be-longey too muchee bad heart," he urged. "What fo' you no makee walkee way-lo bottom-side?"

I felt the hopelessness of trying to make him understand that English statesmen were never disgraced nowadays for political offences; but that we were satisfied with dismissing the offender from office and excluding him therefrom until he succeeds in tripping up the minister who has supplanted him,—a punishment which sometimes incapacitates him from fresh mischief for more than a year. So I rather led him to suppose that Mr. Gladstone had been not so much acquitted as merely reprieved; and that he was, in fact, in the position of a prisoner bound over in his own recognizances to come up for judgment when called for.

The next thing was to explain to him the position of Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and the two sections of Liberal Unionists respectively owning allegiance to them. This was a somewhat more difficult task, and I found it especially hard to explain to my pupil the exact political position of Mr. Chamberlain. At last, however, I succeeded, or thought I did, and Ching's hour being now up, I dismissed him with the injunction to study our newspapers daily, and to bring me on the following Wednesday a connected account of the successive developments

of the crisis, together with an intelligent commentary of his own thereon.

At the appointed day and hour my pupil again presented himself, and I saw from the first glance at the well filled note-book which he laid before me, that he had not been idle. The results of his labours, however, proved when I came to examine them to be of very little value. In directing him to study the daily papers diligently, I had forgotten to warn him that the keen competition between them rendered it frequently necessary for them to contradict each other's information without too close or constant a reference to the actual state of the facts. Unaware of this peculiarity of our journalistic enterprise, the unfortunate young man had each morning industriously collected all the various paragraphs of latest political intelligence which were to be found in his newspapers, and copied them one after another, without any attempt at collation, into his diary of events. The effect when he began at my request to read out to me the contents of his note-book was, of course, very remarkable. "Lord Hartington has been invited by the Prime Minister to form a Government, Lord Salisbury offering in that event to serve under him." "Lord Salisbury has offered Lord Hartington a place in the Cabinet, but there has never been any question of the Prime Minister's stepping down from his place to make room for the leader of the Unionist Liberals." "Lord Salisbury has asked Lord Hartington either to form a Coalition Government himself, or to enter the existing Administration, the Prime Minister expressing his entire willingness to assent to either arrangement." "Lord Salisbury has neither invited Lord Hartington to form a Coalition Government nor offered him a seat in the Conservative Cabinet: he has simply expressed a wish to consult the leader of the Unionist Liberals as to the course to be pursued in the new situation of affairs." Again: "In accordance with the Prime Minister's request for his

immediate presence Lord Hartington left Rome on Saturday night." "Lord Hartington, we are informed, will not start on his homeward journey until Sunday afternoon." "Lord Hartington, it is stated, will leave Rome for England on Monday." "It is not expected that Lord Hartington will now deem it necessary to hasten in any degree his departure from Rome. He will now probably complete the fortnight's stay which he originally contemplated making in the Eternal City," &c., &c., &c.

Ching-Ki-Fu read through this series of extracts in the order in which I have transcribed them with immovable gravity; and, regarding them as a useful exercise in the pronunciation of English, I did not interrupt him. When he had finished, I asked to see his own commentary on the situation. It was full of interest, and contained more than one ingenious suggestion for the settlement of the political difficulty; but, taken as a whole, the plans involved a somewhat greater amount of beheading and banishing than could, I fear, be exactly fitted in to our democratic system. I perceived that I should have to enlighten him still further as to the working of our institutions, and I thought it better to postpone the lesson until the crisis had more nearly approached a solution. I accordingly requested him to defer his next visit for a week, by which time I calculated that the work of Ministerial reconstruction would be complete. I added, as he took his leave, that he need not trouble himself to do more than read the political intelligence which appeared in the newspapers from day to day, and do his best to master its bearings upon the situation.

When Ching-Ki-Fu came to me for his next lesson, the crisis had reached what may be called the conclusion of its second act. Lord Hartington having definitely refused either to form, or to take office in a Coalition Government, the Premier had made proposals of Ministerial marriage to Mr. Goschen;

and that distinguished politician had, with only as much hesitation as is considered becoming under the circumstances, whispered that he would ask Mamma. The maternal consent, and even the maternal blessing had been not only pronounced at Devonshire House, but had been formally published in the newspapers along with the announcement of the match, and nothing now remained but to take the necessary steps for providing the bride with an eligible country seat.

I must confess that the series of negotiations which had thus resulted was very little to my liking. As an old-fashioned Tory, I was inclined to regard Lord Randolph's departure as rather in the nature of a good riddance; and if I had been consulted by the leaders of my party, I should strongly have recommended filling his place by some judicious selection from within our own ranks. However, I did not care to press this particular view of the matter upon a foreigner; so, after ascertaining that Ching had correctly informed himself as to the actual events of the previous week, I proceeded to comment upon them from the orthodox and official Conservative standpoint. But before I had got far with my observations on the absolute necessity of strengthening the Cabinet by an infusion of Liberal Unionist blood, I perceived that he was getting puzzled; so I stopped, and asked him his difficulty. He then told me, in tolerably good book-English that he had understood me to say that the Liberal Unionists were still good friends with the Government, and meant to support them in Parliament. I admitted that that was so, but still insisted on the importance of getting their leader or a prominent member of their party to take a seat on the Treasury Bench. At this, Ching became more and more impatient and excited, till at last he broke out: "What fo' wantchee catchee one piecee, two piecee, Libbelal Unionist? What fo' wantchee makee belongey Treasuly Bench? S'posey no belongey

Tleasuly Bench, allo-same no chin-chin Gland Olo Man. Seppalattist no catchee topside."

I had of course to admit that after Lord Hartington's pledges it was true, as Ching had said, that even if no Liberal Unionist joined the Government, that party were still bound not to return to their allegiance to Mr. Gladstone, and consequently that they could and would defeat any attempt of the Separatist party to recover power. But I endeavoured to make Ching understand the extreme importance of "debating strength" under our Parliamentary system of government, and assured him that any administration which did not possess an adequate supply of this strength available for use in the House of Commons would be in a very precarious position. I thought, however, that I should never succeed in making him understand this characteristic of our institutions. Again and again he asked me whether I meant any more than that the members of a government should "belongey smart inside," or, in other words, be able and intelligent men; and again and again I answered that in our politics it was not sufficient to "belongey smart inside," one must belongey smart outside also—as smart as possible, smart to the finger-ends, in order to get to the top of the Parliamentary tree and keep there. He could not be got to see the sense of this, although, as he frankly assured me, he had no prejudice against the gift of eloquence. "My likee velly good talkee," he frequently repeated. "My velly much chin-chin joss-pidgin-man China-side." He had conceived a great respect for the oratory of our missionaries; but a nation that could seriously agree to intrust the whole of its "law-pidgin" to those men, or, what is still more extraordinary, to that man who can talk most fluently, appeared to be in a condition of positive mental imbecility. "Hab got wata topside," as he graphically expressed it.

By this time I was beginning to

despair of ever getting Ching-Ki-Fu to comprehend the peculiar merits of a democratic system; but after proceeding a little further in my exposition I came upon a difficulty which induced me to abandon the attempt as hopeless. I was dwelling on the importance of maintaining the union of the Unionist party in the House of Commons, and pointing out that the effect of their meeting with a Parliamentary defeat would inevitably be to compel recourse to another general election when my pupil, in a state of high excitement interrupted me.

"What fo' you no wanthee catchee genal 'lection nothertim'?" cried he. "'Lector-man talkee allo-same. No hab Home Rule. No can do."

He had touched the weak place. I told him that that was the very thing we doubted. No human being I said could be certain that "'lector men" would "talkee allo-same" on the subject of Home Rule if the question were put to him a second time. But this only increased Ching's perplexity. He reminded me that I had told him that the people were now supreme, and if that were the case, he argued, no political party had a right to balk them of the declaration of their will. If there was any ground for supposing that they had changed their minds on the subject of Home Rule, that was a reason not for obstructing but for facilitating the delivery of their new mandate.

I confess that, as a Tory, I was not blind to the anomaly which he thus exposed. But I had undertaken to expound Parliamentary Democracy to him as a reasonable and workable system, and I felt that it was futile to persist in the attempt in the face of such objections as these.

So I requested him to go out for half-an-hour's walk, and promised him that on his return I would have ready for him a rough Chinese version of another fifty lines of the first *Æneid* for translation into English prose.

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.¹

THE Evangelical Revival, specially identified with the name of John Wesley, has long since won for itself an important place in the social history of the eighteenth century, and has now been made the subject of an interesting little monograph by Canon Overton, in Professor Creighton's series entitled 'Epochs of Church History.' Mr. Overton's volume, however, is not so much an historical narrative as a collection of biographical sketches and essays upon various aspects of the movement. One chapter is devoted to John Wesley himself, another to George Whitefield and others of Wesley's immediate colleagues, a third to a comparison between Methodism and Evangelicalism—a term for which the author apologises—a fourth to the leading Evangelical clergy of the century, and a fifth to the contemporary Evangelical laity. Then we have separate chapters on the Literature, the Doctrines, and the Results, of the Revival, with a discerning estimate of its weak points and of the opposition which it encountered. All these topics are treated in an independent and charitable spirit; nor would it be easy to gather from Mr. Overton's temperate criticisms to which school of theological opinion he may profess to belong. But, after all, we miss that which the character of the volume would have led us to expect—a consecutive account of the rise and progress of Methodism in this country. For this we must still look to more elaborate biographical works, like Southey's and Tyerman's *Lives of Wesley*, or learned monographs on the movement, such as that to be found in

Sir James Stephen's admirable 'Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography.'

The part played by the University of Oxford in the early history of Methodism is treated far too lightly by Mr. Overton. During the first half of the eighteenth century, that University was equally degenerate both as a place of religion and as a place of learning. Too much has been made, it is true, of Gibbon's malicious strictures upon it, but the evidence is conclusive that, during the two generations when Oxford Jacobitism was at its height, Oxford education was at its lowest ebb. The influence of religion was no less weakened in the University, and had, indeed, been on the decline ever since the Restoration. Notwithstanding their boisterous demonstrations of sympathy with the High Church party in politics, many of its senior members, both clerical and lay, secretly leaned to Rationalism, and the Deism which came in with the Revolution of 1688 became rife again under the Georges. In the year 1730 three students were expelled for holding Deistical tenets: several Heads of Colleges issued a joint notice censuring the spread of Deism among the students; and the Vice-Chancellor, in a *programma*, solemnly warned tutors and undergraduates against literature calculated to disturb Christian faith.

It was in this unpromising soil, teeming with High Church prejudices, deeply saturated by worldliness, and now tainted with Deism, that the seeds of Methodism were sown at Oxford.

John Wesley, its chief founder, was the son of an excellent clergyman, Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, and, after passing through Charterhouse and Christ Church, had been

¹ 'The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century,' by John Henry Overton, Canon of Lincoln, and Rector of Epworth. London. 1886.

elected Fellow of Lincoln in 1726. Having been ordained in the previous year, he acted for a while as his father's curate, and, on his return to Oxford in 1729, found his younger brother Charles, then an undergraduate of Christ Church, already a member of a small religious association, which afterwards expanded into the Methodist communion. Of this little band John Wesley at once became the acknowledged leader. Their earliest meetings were held for the purpose of reading the Greek Testament, and encouraging one another in study and good works. But within a year their sympathies widened, and they extended their charity to others. William Morgan, one of their number, visiting a condemned prisoner, was struck by the misery which he witnessed in the gaol, and persuaded the Wesleys to aid him in what may be called a prison-mission. With the consent of the Bishop of Oxford, and of his chaplain, they undertook the work of visitation, both in Bocardo, the debtors' prison, and in the county gaol. Active benevolence soon claimed even more of their energy than earnest study, which, however, they never abandoned. This handful of friends, themselves very poor, started a school for poor children, and maintained the mistress at their joint expense, assisted poor debtors and kept their families from penury, visited the parish workhouse, relieved the sick, and in all their ministrations strove to better the spiritual condition of those whom they befriended. Nor were the undergraduates neglected. Wesley and his associates did their utmost to rescue the weaker of them from vice, and to bring them under the influence of quiet and serious companions. They encouraged them to study earnestly, and to lay out their time carefully, specially insisting on habits of close thinking, for they were intolerant of indolence, even in thought. In order to gain the confidence of his juniors, John Wesley would invite them to breakfast, and endeavour to interest them in his own efforts. To

him and to his fellows the essence of the movement was not devotional but practical, not the propagation of a new creed, but the moral salvation of human souls.

From the first, they adopted a strict code of religious observance, and made a practice of receiving the Holy Communion weekly—in that age, a rare act of religious devotion. Clayton, one of their first adherents, is said to have induced his colleagues to cultivate the habit of rigorous fasting. It was thoroughly in harmony with the self-denial and abstraction from the world already characteristic of the Society. For instance, Wesley and his companions would sometimes break off deliberately in the middle of a sentence, when the chapel bell began to ring, that they might "beware of the lust of finishing." It is strange that George Whitefield, another of the early converts, should have almost fallen a victim to his ascetic enthusiasm. He confessed that he at first believed that Christianity had required him to "go nasty"; for which reason he abstained from washing, clothed himself in evil garments, and fasted so continuously during Lent that he became unable to walk upstairs, and was compelled to submit to medical treatment. Charles Wesley, too, injured his health by excessive fasting; and John Wesley so exhausted himself, not only by fasting, but by overwork and walks of a length then almost unknown among students, that he broke a blood-vessel and was laid by for a time. The saddest case of all was that of William Morgan, whose fasting laid the foundation of an illness which developed madness, and terminated in his untimely death. This event naturally produced a sensation in the University, and was most unfairly laid at the door of John Wesley; but Morgan's father, no friend to Methodist practices, entirely exonerated Wesley, and even intrusted to him another son, as a pupil.

This ascetic discipline seems to have been almost the only outward and visible peculiarity of the Society calculated

to attract much attention or to provoke hostile criticism. As Mr. Overton remarks, it is "difficult to realise the fact that, in a place especially devoted to Christian education, the mere sight of a few young men going quietly to receive the Holy Communion every Sunday at St. Mary's, their own University Church, should have attracted a crowd of ridiculing spectators," or that piety and active benevolence should have been "thought eccentric in a little body of men, the leader of whom was an ordained clergyman, and all of whom were intending to take Holy Orders." But it is not so astonishing that an unsocial, if not Pharisaical, demeanour, sometimes attended with slovenliness of costume and even with neglect of personal cleanliness, should have exposed the young reformers to some obloquy among their companions, most of whom, no doubt, would have gained much by cultivating their acquaintance. At all events, they soon incurred a storm of juvenile ridicule. They were nick-named Bible-moths, Supererogation-men, Sacramentarians, the Holy or the Godly Club. But the name by which they were specially known, and which has acquired a world-wide currency, was that of Methodists. This name was not of modern origin. There was an ancient society of physicians known by it, and, like the kindred name of "precisians," it had been applied, as Dr. Calamy informs us, to "those who stood up for God." It was now fastened on this little group of Oxford zealots, probably on account of the methodical rules whereby they endeavoured to regulate their behaviour and hours of work. Nor were the undergraduates their only foes. The seniors of Christ Church held a meeting to consider what could be done against them. At Lincoln College, the Rector and Fellows showed determined hostility to them: the Master of Pembroke threatened to expel Whitefield unless he gave up visiting: a brother Fellow would not oblige a Methodist by reading prayers for him in chapel, lest his

obnoxious practices should be thus facilitated. Still, they persevered, and persecution doubtless contributed to keep their union unbroken. Whitefield, afterwards as great a power in the Revival as Wesley himself, did not in Oxford assert his independence. As a servitor of Pembroke, he occupied too lowly a position to admit of his taking a lead in a Society which, modest as it was, consisted of Fellows, tutors, and ordinary students. Moreover, he entered College nearly three years after the movement was initiated, and during the early part of his career knew little of its promoters, though ardently desirous of joining them. This was accomplished by an accident. He was called to the bedside of a poor man who had attempted to cut his throat, and, pitying his miserable condition, sent in haste for Charles Wesley, begging the messenger to conceal his own name. The injunction was disobeyed. Charles Wesley sought out Whitefield, asked him to breakfast, and immediately introduced him to the Society. So narrow were his means that during his three years' residence at Oxford he received but twenty-four pounds from his friends, supporting himself mainly on the emoluments of his servitorship and the kind presents of his tutor. There was, indeed, little wealth in the infant Methodist Church, and John Wesley himself, having fallen into debt, had been thankful to find a garret for fifty shillings a year.

But Methodism in Oxford was short-lived, and its history virtually ends with the ill-advised mission of John and Charles Wesley to Georgia in 1735. Long before this, it had been manifest that, without John Wesley's personal influence, the Society must cease to flourish. During his absence in 1733 the number of communicants shrank from twenty-seven to five; and it was because he then appreciated the importance of Oxford as his special field of duty that he declined the living of Epworth. In 1738 there were but three Methodist gentlemen in the

University. In the following year none visited the prison or the work-house, and the little school was on the eve of being given up. The Oxford Methodists could not survive without the presence and example of their leader; and within three years of his departure they were virtually extinct in the city which had been at once the cradle of the movement and the stronghold of opposition to it. After his return from Georgia in 1738, John Wesley revisited Oxford at intervals, but found himself unable to resuscitate the Methodist Society during these flying visits. The old prejudice against it, however, was still alive. In 1740, a student named Graves, being suspected of Methodism, was forced, in order to obtain his *testamur*, to sign a paper renouncing "the modern practice and principles of the persons commonly called Methodists." At midsummer, 1741, John Wesley spent three weeks in Oxford, in order to inquire about the exercises for his B.D. degree, and preached a sermon, of which it was predicted by Gambold, a former associate, then unfriendly to him, that it was not worth preparing it, as there would be no audience. In 1744 he occupied the University pulpit for the last time, in spite of the authorities, who would gladly have excluded him, if they could, from preaching in his turn. In the course of this sermon he roundly upbraided the gownsmen as a generation of triflers, and reproached the Fellows for their proverbial uselessness, pride, haughtiness of spirit, impatience, peevishness, sloth, gluttony, and sensuality. It was subsequently arranged that in future some other Fellow should preach in Wesley's place. In 1751, according to the Statutes, he resigned his Fellowship on his marriage. Six years later, Romaine, who as a student had stood aloof from Methodism, was excluded from the University pulpit for insisting upon Justification by Faith, and the imperfection of our best works. Finally, in 1768, the Vice-Chancellor expelled six Methodist students from

St. Edmund Hall, as disturbers of the peace; and this high-handed act was actually defended by Dr. Johnson at a time when University discipline was at its lowest—gambling, drunkenness, and blasphemy being condoned as venial offences. After this, we hear no more of Methodism at Oxford. It is not hard to understand why it failed to command success there after its first conquests, since it appealed more and more to the religious enthusiasm of the less educated classes, abandoning any attempt to satisfy the speculative reason.

Thirty years before this official condemnation of Methodism at the University, it had begun to spread with marvellous rapidity over the country. John Wesley himself dated the beginning of the Revival from the spring of 1738, when he came under the influence of the Moravian Peter Böhler, and experienced a sudden "conversion," which he regarded as the birth of his true spiritual life. But the energy of his nature soon caused him to rebel against the mystic "stillness" of the Moravians, as well as the quietism of Law, his first spiritual guide, and launched him upon a career of missionary labour which he carried on without intermission for more than half a century. The preface to his *Journal* records that "he published more books, travelled more miles, and preached more sermons, than any minister of his age." As Canon Overton tells us, "the whole length and breadth of England were traversed by him over and over again: he made frequent journeys into Scotland and Ireland; and at every town and village where he stayed, he was ready, in season and out of season, to preach the everlasting Gospel." He constantly rode on horseback forty, fifty, or sixty miles a day: he found time for reading and writing on his journeys; and he would often preach three or four times a day. It has even been calculated that, in the course of his working life, he travelled above two hundred thousand miles, and preached

some forty thousand sermons. From the first, he was the life and soul of Methodism, yet Canon Overton, defending him against the charge of despotic self-will, remarks that several of its most distinctive features were not originated by him, but adopted in deference to the opinions of others. One of these was the practice of field-preaching, initiated by Whitefield, on the 17th February, 1739, when he delivered an open-air sermon to the colliers of Kingswood, near Bristol. Wesley felt and confessed a great repugnance to such a deviation from Church order, but soon afterwards followed Whitefield's example, though he never rivalled Whitefield's power of entrancing vast audiences. In the same year, the first separate meeting-house for Methodists was founded, also in Bristol; and, perhaps in consequence of this, Wesley and his associates found themselves generally excluded from the pulpits of churches. The next step towards separation was taken in the following autumn, when lay-preaching was sanctioned by Wesley, though not without great reluctance. In 1743, the Rules of the Society, which still constitute its fundamental law, were drawn up and issued with the signatures of John and Charles Wesley. In 1744, the first "Conference" was held, and "class-meetings" soon became a characteristic feature of Methodism. Mr. Overton, however, is unwilling to suspect the early Methodists of schismatic intentions. According to him, the class-meetings "arose simply from the necessity of finding money to pay for what Wesley himself would have called a 'preaching-house' at Bristol." They were instituted for the purpose of a weekly collection, and converted incidentally into gatherings for the mutual censorship of conduct. With equal charity, he endeavours to show that many other Methodist institutions—such as the "love-feasts," the "watch-nights," the "quarterly tickets," the "band-meetings," the "circuits," the offices of "superintendents" and "cir-

cuit-stewards," and the "Conference,"—grew naturally out of practical exigencies, and were not consciously devised as parts of an elaborate system designed to supplant the National Church. At all events, it is certain that, notwithstanding his disparagement of parochial discipline, Wesley remained at heart an Anglican, both in doctrine and policy. He was a stout opponent of Calvinism, he condemned the Puritan spirit of the seventeenth century, he avowed his dislike of the Presbyterian services in Scotland, and his admiration of the services prescribed by the English liturgy; and, though he was not borne to his grave, like his brother Charles, by clergymen of the National Church, he always manifested, and especially in his later years, a cordial sympathy and respect for them.

Canon Overton, like Tyerman, Wesley's latest biographer, passes rapidly over the physical manifestations, or "outward signs" of the Methodist propaganda, on which Southey lays so great a stress, and which impressed contemporary observers as the most striking feature of the Revival. Now, it is important to observe that contagious paroxysms of religious excitement are by no means peculiar to Methodism, or even to Protestantism. On the contrary, Protestantism has never yet rivalled Catholicism in its power of inspiring sudden and wholesale devotion. The sweeping triumphs of Latin Christianity over the barbarian conquerors are still unparalleled, or paralleled only by the success of Xavier and his followers. Pilgrimage was the expression of an intense and universal religious impulse, and it may well be doubted whether the most powerful spiritual leaders of modern times could extort so laborious a pledge of sincerity from their disciples. The audiences of Peter the Hermit and Bernard thrilled with a more overwhelming flood of emotion than John Wesley's congregations at the Kingswood collieries. The cry of "God wills it" that burst

from the great Council at Clermont spread wider and sank deeper into the heart of Christendom than the groans which filled the early Methodist prayer-meetings. The annals of the Middle Ages are full of passionate ebullitions of religious enthusiasm, sometimes coloured by political feelings, but invariably accompanied by the two characteristic symptoms of Methodist Revivalism — affections of the nervous system, and a temporary reformation of life and manners. They recurred during the exciting epoch of the Crusades, and the camp of Walter the Penniless was probably fertile in scenes wilder than those which John Wesley complacently recorded in his Diary, and justified in his letters to his brother Samuel. Again, during the memorable years of tribulation which preceded and followed the Black Death, the emotional and spasmodic element became dominant in the religion of the day, and vented itself in three extraordinary outbreaks during the fourteenth century. Of the same nature were the panics which led to so many massacres of the Jews, and the strange popular suspicions which proved the ruin of the Templars. The Reformation cleared the atmosphere for a time; not, however, without leaving the germs of new religious disorders, belonging to a different type, and corresponding to the more spiritual character of the Reformed doctrines.

The sectarian fanaticism of the seventeenth century, extravagant as it was, owed much of its extravagance to political fanaticism. But we are fortunate in possessing, from the pen of the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, an elaborate 'Narrative of the Revival of Religion in New England,' during the years 1734 and 1735, which shows that Methodist Revivalism, as the systematic propagation of a religious epidemic, had been anticipated in the American colonies. Mr. Edwards's narrative is couched in the language of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' and the Puritan divines, and is highly charged with the quaint technical phraseology

of Calvinism. We read of "legal terrors," "legal distresses," "legal humiliation," "legal convictions," "legal awakenings," "legal humblings." The author writes in the spirit of a physician describing the pathology of a familiar disease to a brother professor, and displays a candour and good faith, which does not shrink from recognising the boasted "visions" as figments of the imagination. Nevertheless, his pages are darkened by a mysticism compared to which the fierce penitence of the Flagellants may appear genial and humane. In all the varieties of experience which he enumerates, we do not find that he recognises any exemption from the "Slough of Despond." According as they have or have not passed this, he inexorably determines the respective destinies of men. He maintains the doctrine of God's arbitrary will to have been the most salutary medicine for the times. In many of the converted he discerned "a sort of complacency in the attribute of God's judgment as displayed in his threatenings of eternal damnation to sinners," and adds that "they have sometimes almost called it a willingness to be damned." Yet this morbid exaltation does not seem to have struck him as any evidence of mental aberration, nor did he suspect that instances of suicide and religious insanity, which he admitted, were related to Revivalism by any physical connection of cause and effect.

Probably this New England Revival is the earliest recorded precedent, within Protestant memory, for that initiated by John Wesley. It is remarkable that his sermons were far more productive of convulsions and hysterical fits than those of Whitefield, although, as Canon Overton observes, they were less sensational, and, in their published form, appear little calculated to excite sentimental frenzy. On the other hand, it is certain that, while Charles Wesley mildly condemned, and Whitefield distrusted, such proofs of instantaneous

conversion, John Wesley accepted and favoured them as witnesses of the Spirit; at least, until a late period of his life. As his brother frankly said, with a large fund of common sense and administrative ability, he "seemed born for the benefit of knaves." He owned that, in some cases, "nature mixed with grace," and "Satan mimicked this work of God." But he did not perceive that indulgence of the religious passions has in it something of sensuality, and that Protestant Revivalism, when it descends to a kind of jugglery in the production of moral renovation, cannot afford to cast reproach on the meretricious arts of Romanism. Wesley even declared, in deprecating the remonstrances of his brother Samuel, that he had known people converted in their sleep; but most of the instances which he mentions strongly resemble the accounts of demoniacal possession in the Gospels, the evil spirits being exorcised by prayer, and the converts relieved by a sudden access of saving faith. No wonder that Methodism was discredited in the sceptical world by these extravagances, that grave Bishops and moderate Churchmen withdrew the qualified countenance which they had first given to it, and that before long the miracles of Methodist Revivalism were out-heroded by certain foreign enthusiasts called the French Prophets, against whom John Wesley himself warned his followers. Before his death, the fanatical excesses of early Methodism had already spent their strength, and a more rational tone of practical religion had supervened; but, among the communities which he founded, Revivals on a smaller scale have recurred at irregular periods, both in this country and in America. Among the latter, may be specially mentioned those of 1816, 1843, and 1857-8, when, as we are informed by a sympathetic chronicler, the crews of ships on their homeward voyages were affected by the same wave of religious emotion which was sweeping over their countrymen on shore.

Another memorable Revival spread itself on both sides of the Atlantic in 1859-60, until its progress was significantly checked by the outbreak of the great American Civil War. We must not, however, allow these questionable phenomena to occupy too large a space in our general conception of Methodism. While many of its first converts insisted upon signs from Heaven, tens of thousands were led to embrace it by the force of moral conviction: its cardinal doctrines left a permanent impression on the religious world, and became the inheritance of the great Evangelical School at the beginning of the present century.

The wonderful expansion of Methodism during the life of its founder is perhaps without precedent in religious history. In 1730, as we have seen, its only adherents were a handful of Oxford students: twelve years later it numbered eleven hundred members in London: long before the end of the century all Great Britain and nearly all the American colonies had rung with the eloquence of Whitefield or with the soberer but hardly less effective appeals of Wesley himself: meeting-houses had sprung up in every important town, an army of missionaries was engaged in itinerating over the country, and, partly through Lady Huntingdon's influence, Methodism had found a considerable amount of acceptance even in the higher ranks of society. Franklin's testimony to the power of Whitefield's preaching is well known; but Chesterfield, Bolingbroke, and even Hume, were also among his hearers. At the time of Wesley's death, in 1791, the Methodist Church, or Connexion, as it was called, numbered above three hundred preachers in Great Britain alone, and nearly two hundred in the United States, where the success of the Revolution had made it necessary for Wesley to establish a separate organization, under a "superintendent," whom, to the horror of good Churchmen, he consecrated as all but a bishop.

The number of members in the United Kingdom already exceeded seventy thousand, and rose to more than one hundred thousand in the course of the next decade. Considering how carefully Wesley had weeded out backsliders and weak-kneed brethren: considering also that schism had broken out at an early stage and detached a considerable body from the orthodox Connexion, this aggregate may be taken as representing not merely the nominal but the effective strength of Methodism. As it had sprung from the bosom of the Established Church, so its converts were chiefly drawn from that communion, or, at least, from a class of persons who belonged to none of the ordinary sects of Nonconformists. That it gave a powerful impulse to Dissent, in spite of Wesley's personal attachment to the Church, may be inferred from the fact "that, whereas at George the First's death, the proportion of Dissenters to Churchmen was about one to twenty-five, by 1800 it was computed to be one to four." On the other hand, its indirect effect in stimulating zeal within the Church itself was undoubtedly great. Though neither Sunday Schools, nor Foreign Missions, nor the Abolition of the Slave Trade, can be claimed among the results of Methodism—indeed, Whitefield himself was a slave-owner—all these movements owed much to the religious and benevolent spirit kindled by Methodism, as well as by the more constant influence of the Evangelical School.

The short chapter in which Canon Overton shows the affinity and the contrast between Methodism and so-called Evangelicalism is one of the most interesting in the volume. It would be a great delusion to imagine that "Evangelical" religion, as now understood, was invented or first developed by the apostles of Methodism. Not to speak of the great Puritan divines, or of such American writers as Jonathan Edwards, there had never been wanting in the Church of Eng-

land a succession of pious and sober-minded clergymen holding the same views as were afterwards connected with the names of Wilberforce and the Clapham School. Both Methodists and Evangelical Churchmen "aimed at reviving spiritual religion; they both so far resembled the Puritanism of the seventeenth century in that they contended for the immediate and particular influence of the Holy Spirit, for the total degeneracy of man, for the vicarious nature of the Atonement, for the absolute unlawfulness of certain kinds of amusement, for the strict observance of the Lord's Day or Sabbath (for they used the words indiscriminately); and they both agreed in differing from Puritanism, by taking either no side in politics at all, or else taking the opposite side from that which the Puritans would have taken, by disclaiming sympathy with Dissenters or Nonconformists, by glorying in the fact that they were members of the Church of England (Methodists no less than Evangelicals), and by the most staunch loyalty to the Throne." The distinctions between them consisted mainly in the differences of spirit and mode of working. The Methodists were restless and impulsive, the Evangelicals valued moderation and self-restraint: the Methodists drew their converts from the lower and lower-middle classes, "the backbone of Evangelicalism was in the upper and upper-middle classes:" the Methodists adopted an elaborate organisation of "societies" in lieu of the parochial system, to which the Evangelicals adhered. But there were many connecting links between the two, and many excellent clergymen whom it would be difficult to assign exclusively to either camp. Such were James Hervey, William Romaine, John Newton, the friend of Cowper, Thomas Scott, Richard Cecil, the two Milners, Walker of Truro, and Fletcher of Madeley, who, though closely identified with Methodism, were thoroughly attached to parochial work, and refused to be diverted from it. These

men, with others to whom Canon Overton devotes short notices, were only not Methodists because they were satisfied to labour for the good of souls within the sphere traced for them by the Church of England, and would assuredly have kept alive Evangelical religion in the country, even if Wesley and Whitefield had never existed.

As we review the work of the Evangelical Revival of the last century, we cannot but recognise in it a noble expression of individual piety, and a powerful instrument for the purification of national character. The Christian life has seldom been seen in greater perfection, or missionary enthusiasm in a manlier form, than among the apostles of Methodism, with their Evangelical precursors and successors in the Church of England itself. They may have been inferior in mental stature to the greatest of the Puritan leaders, and in scholarly culture to the pioneers of the Tractarian movement. They knew little of Biblical criticism, and never dreamed of the influence to be exercised by modern science on theology: many articles of their dogmatic creed will not bear the scrutiny of a later philosophy: their popular discourses were too highly charged with appeals to mere religious emotion: their domestic controversies were sometimes carried on with an acrimony unworthy of their professions. But, in per-

sonal holiness, in self-denial, and in single-minded devotion to Christian duty, as exemplified by Christ and His Apostles, they rose as far above the ordinary moral standard of their age as they sank below its highest intellectual aspirations. Theirs was no barren faith: it constantly bore fruit in good works, and its unseen operation was felt in that practical spirit of philanthropy which stirred the heart of England, while the dreams of Rousseau were plunging France into anarchy, in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This is a debt which the nation owes to Wesley and his Evangelical contemporaries, but which has never been fully acknowledged. It was they who laboured most abundantly among the Christian ministers of their day to associate religion with humanity, making it a true bond of sympathy between classes, teaching rich men to regard the poor as their brothers in Christ, and poor men to console themselves with a hope beyond the grave, welcoming into their fellowship the very outcasts of society as the chosen objects of Divine mercy; and thus insensibly combating those perilous counsels of revenge and despair which possessed the minds of the French peasantry at the same epoch, and culminated in the French Revolution.

GEORGE C. BRODRICK.

THE WOODLANDERS.

BY THOMAS HARDY.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AT these warm words Winterborne was not less dazed than he was moved in heart. The novelty of the avowal rendered what it carried with it incomprehensible by him in its entirety. Only a few short months ago completely estranged from this family—beholding Grace going to and fro in the distance, clothed with the alienating radiance of obvious superiority, the wife of the then popular and fashionable Fitzpiers, hopelessly outside his social boundary down to so recent a time that flowers then folded were hardly faded yet—he was now asked by that jealously-guarding father of hers to take courage; to get himself ready for the day when he should be able to claim her.

The old times came back to him in dim procession. How he had been snubbed: how Melbury had despised his Christmas party: how that sweet, coy Grace herself had looked down upon him and his household arrangements, and poor Creedle's contrivances!

Well, he could not believe it. Surely the adamant barrier of marriage with another could not be pierced like this! It did violence to custom. Yet a new law might do anything. But was it at all within the bounds of probability that a woman who, over and above her own attainments, had been accustomed to those of a cultivated professional man, could ever be the wife of such as he? Since the date of his rejection he had almost grown to see the reasonableness of that treatment. He had said to himself again and again that her father was right: that the poor coarl, Giles Winterborne, would never have been able to make

such a dainty girl happy. Yet now that she had stood in a position further removed from his own than at first, he was asked to prepare to woo her. He was full of doubt. Nevertheless, it was not in him to show backwardness. To act so promptly as Melbury desired him to act seemed, indeed, scarcely wise, because of the uncertainty of events. Giles knew nothing of legal procedure; but he did know that for him to step up to Grace as a lover before the bond which bound her was actually dissolved was simply an extravagant dream of her father's overstrained mind. He pitied Melbury for his almost childish enthusiasm, and saw that the aging man must have suffered acutely to be weakened to this unreasoning desire.

Winterborne was far too magnanimous to harbour any cynical conjecture that the timber-merchant, in his intense affection for Grace, was courting him now because that young lady, when disunited, would be left in an anomalous position, to escape which a bad husband was better than none. He felt quite sure that his old friend was simply on tenterhooks of anxiety to repair the almost irreparable error of dividing two whom nature had striven to join together in earlier days, and that in his ardour to do this he was oblivious of formalities. The cautious supervision of his past years had overleapt itself at last. Hence Winterborne perceived that, in this new beginning, the necessary care not to compromise Grace by too early advances must be exercised by himself.

Perhaps Winterborne was not quite so ardent as heretofore. There is no such thing as a stationary love: men are either loving more or loving less. But Giles himself recognised no decline

in his sense of her dearness. If the flame did indeed burn lower now than when he had fetched her from Sherton at her last return from school, the marvel was small. He had been labouring ever since his rejection and her marriage to reduce his former passion to a docile friendship, out of pure regard to its expediency; and their separation may have helped him to a partial success.

A week and more passed, and there was no further news of Melbury. But the effect of the intelligence he had already transmitted upon the elastic-nerved daughter of the woods had been much what the old surgeon Jones had surmised. It had soothed her perturbed spirit better than all the opiates in the pharmacopœia. She had slept unbrokenly a whole night and a day. The "new law" was to her a mysterious, beneficent, god-like entity, lately descended upon earth, that would make her as she once had been without trouble or annoyance. Her position fretted her, its abstract features rousing an aversion which was even greater than her aversion to the personality of him who had caused it. It was mortifying, productive of slights, undignified. Him she could forget: her circumstances she had always with her.

She saw nothing of Winterborne during the days of her recovery; and perhaps on that account her fancy wove about him a more romantic tissue than it could have done if he had stood before her with all the specks and flaws inseparable from material humanity. He rose upon her memory as the fruit-god and the wood-god in alternation: sometimes leafy and smeared with green lichen, as she had seen him amongst the sappy boughs of the plantations: sometimes cider-stained and starred with apple-pips, as she had met him on his return from cider-making in White Hart Vale, with his vats and presses beside him. In her secret heart she almost approximated to her father's enthusiasm in wishing to show Giles once for all how she still regarded him.

The question whether the future would indeed bring them together for life was a standing wonder with her. She knew that it could not with any propriety do so just yet. But reverently believing in her father's sound judgment and knowledge, as good girls are wont to do, she remembered what he had written about her giving a hint to Winterborne lest there should be risk in delay, and her feelings were not averse to such a step, so far as it could be done without danger at this early stage of the proceedings.

From being a frail phantom of her former equable self she returned in bounds to a condition of passable philosophy. She bloomed again in the face in the course of a few days, and was well enough to go about as usual. One day Mrs. Melbury proposed that for a change she should be driven in the gig to Sherton market, whither Melbury's man was going on other errands. Grace had no business whatever in Sherton; but it crossed her mind that Winterborne would probably be there, and this made the thought of such a drive interesting.

On the way she saw nothing of him; but when the horse was walking slowly through the obstructions of Sheep Street, she discerned the young man on the pavement. She thought of that time when he had been standing under his apple-tree on her return from school, and of the tender opportunity then missed through her fastidiousness. Her heart rose in her throat. She abjured all such fastidiousness now. Nor did she forget the last occasion on which she had beheld him in that town, making cider in the courtyard of the Earl of Wessex Hotel, while she was figuring as a fine lady in the balcony above.

Grace directed the man to set her down there in the midst, and immediately went up to her lover. Giles had not before observed her, and his eyes now suppressedly looked his pleasure, without the embarrassment that had formerly marked him at such meetings.

When a few words had been spoken, she said archly, "I have nothing to do. Perhaps you are deeply engaged?"

"I? Not a bit. My business now at the best of times is small, I am sorry to say."

"Well, then—I am going into the Abbey. Come along with me."

The proposition had suggested itself as a quick escape from publicity, for many eyes were regarding her. She had hoped that sufficient time had elapsed for the extinction of curiosity; but it was quite otherwise. The people looked at her with tender interest as the deserted girl-wife—without obtrusiveness, and without vulgarity; but she was ill-prepared for scrutiny in any shape.

They walked about the Abbey aisles, and presently sat down. Not a soul was in the building save themselves. She regarded a stained window, with her head sideways, and tentatively asked him if he remembered the last time they were in that town alone.

He remembered it perfectly, and remarked, "You were a proud miss then, and as dainty as you were high. Perhaps you are now?"

Grace slowly shook her head. "Affliction has taken all that out of me," she answered impressively. "Perhaps I am too far the other way now." As there was something lurking in this that she could not explain, she added so quickly as not to allow him time to think of it, "Has my father written to you at all?"

"Yes," said Winterborne.

She glanced ponderingly up at him. "Not about me?"

"Yes."

She saw that he had been bidden to take the hint as to the future which she had been bidden to give, and the discovery sent a scarlet pulsation through her for the moment. However it was only Giles who stood there, of whom she had no fear; and her self-possession returned.

"He said I was to sound you with a view to—what you will understand, if

you care to," continued Winterborne in a low voice. Having been put on this track by herself, he was not disposed to abandon it in a hurry. They had been children together, and there was between them that familiarity as to personal affairs which only such acquaintanceship can give. "You know, Giles," she answered, speaking in a very practical tone, "that that is all very well; but I am in a very anomalous position at present, and I cannot say anything to the point about such things as those."

"No?" he said, with a stray air as regarded the subject. He was looking at her with a curious consciousness of discovery. He had not been imagining that their renewed intercourse would show her to him thus. For the first time he realised an unexpectedness in her, which after all should not have been unexpected. She before him was not the girl, Grace Melbury, whom he had used to know. Of course, he might easily have prefigured as much; but it had never occurred to him. She was a woman who had been married; she had moved on; and without having lost her girlish modesty, she had lost her girlish shyness. The inevitable change, though known to him, had not been heeded; and it struck him into a momentary fixity. The truth was that he had never come into close comradeship with her since her engagement to Fitzpiers, with the brief exception of the evening encounter on Rubdown Hill, when she met him with his cider apparatus; and that interview had been of too cursory a kind for insight.

Winterborne had advanced, too. He could criticise her. Times had been when to criticise a single trait in Grace Melbury would have lain as far beyond his powers as to criticise a deity. This thing was sure: it was a new woman in many ways whom he had come out to see: a creature of more ideas, more dignity, and, above all, more assurance, than the original Grace had been capable of. He could

not at first decide whether he were pleased or displeased at this. But upon the whole the novelty attracted him.

She was so sweet and sensitive that she feared his silence betokened something in his brain of the nature of an enemy to her. "What are you thinking of that makes those lines come in your forehead?" she asked. "I did not mean to offend you by speaking of the time being premature as yet."

Touched by the genuine loving-kindness which had lain at the foundation of these words, and much moved, Winterborne turned his face aside, as he took her by the hand. He was grieved that he had criticised her.

"You are very good, dear Grace," he said in a low voice. "You are better, much better, than you used to be."

"How?"

He could not very well tell her how, and said with an evasive smile, "You are prettier;" which was not what he really had meant. He then remained still holding her right hand in his own right, so that they faced in opposite ways; and, as he did not let go, she ventured upon a tender remonstrance.

"I think we have gone as far as we ought to go at present—and far enough to satisfy my poor father that we are the same as ever. You see, Giles, my case is not settled yet, and if—Oh, suppose I *never* get free!—there should be any hitch or informality!"

She drew a catching breath, and turned pale. The dialogue had been affectionate comedy up to this point. The gloomy atmosphere of the past, and the still gloomy horizon of the present, had been for the interval forgotten. Now, the whole environment came back, the due balance of shade among the light was restored.

"It is sure to be all right, I trust?" she resumed in uneasy accents. "What did my father say the solicitor had told him?"

"Oh—that all is sure enough. The case is so clear—nothing could be

clearer. But the legal part is not yet quite done and finished, as is natural."

"Oh, no,—of course not," she said, sunk in meek thought. "But father said it was *almost*—did he not? Do you know anything about the new law that makes these things so easy?"

"Nothing—except the general fact that it enables ill-assorted husbands and wives to part in a way they could not formerly do without an Act of Parliament."

"Have you to sign a paper, or swear anything? Is it something like that?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"How long has it been introduced?"

"About six months or a year, the lawyer said, I think."

To hear these two poor Arcadian innocents talk of imperial law would have made a humane person weep who should have known what a dangerous structure they were building up on their supposed knowledge. They remained in thought, like children in the presence of the incomprehensible.

"Giles," she said at last, "it makes me quite weary when I think how serious my situation is, or has been. Shall we not go out from here now, as it may seem rather fast of me—our being so long together, I mean—if anybody were to see us? I am almost sure," she added uncertainly, "that I ought not to let you hold my hand yet, knowing that the documents—or whatever it may be—have not been signed; so that I—am still as married as ever—or almost. My dear father has forgotten himself. Not that I feel morally bound to anyone else, after what has taken place—no woman of spirit could—now, too, that several months have passed. But I wish to keep the proprieties as well as I can."

"Yes, yes. Still, your father reminds us that life is short. I myself feel that it is; that is why I wished to understand you in this that we have begun. At times, dear Grace, since receiving your father's letter, I am as uneasy and fearful as a child at what

he said. If one of us were to die before the formal signing and sealing that is to release you have been done—if we should drop out of the world and never have made the most of this little, short, but real opportunity, I should think to myself as I sank down dying, 'Would to my God that I had spoken out my whole heart—given her one poor little kiss when I had the chance to give it! But I never did, although she had promised to be mine some day; and now I never can.' That's what I should think."

She had begun by watching the words from his lips with a mournful regard, as though their passage were visible; but as he went on she dropped her glance. "Yes," she said, "I have thought that, too. And, because I have thought it, I by no means meant, in speaking of the proprieties, to be reserved and cold to you who loved me so long ago, or to hurt your heart as I used to do at that thoughtless time. Oh, not at all, indeed! But—ought I to allow you—Oh, it is too quick—surely!" Her eyes filled with tears of bewildered, alarmed emotion.

Winterborne was too straightforward to influence her further against her better judgment. "Yes—I suppose it is," he said repentantly. "I'll wait till all is settled. What did your father say in that last letter?"

He meant about his progress with the petition; but she, mistaking him, frankly spoke of the personal part. "He said—what I have implied. Should I tell more plainly?"

"Oh, no—don't, if it is a secret."

"Not at all. I will tell every word, straight out, Giles, if you wish. He said I was to encourage you. There. But I cannot obey him further to-day. Come, let us go now." She gently slid her hand from his, and went in front of him out of the Abbey.

"I was thinking of getting some dinner," said Winterborne, changing to the prosaic as they walked. "And you, too, must require something. Do let me take you to a place I know."

Grace was almost without a friend

in the world outside her father's house: her life with Fitzpiers had brought her no society; had sometimes, indeed, brought her deeper solitude and inconsideration than any she had ever known before. Hence it was a treat to her to find herself again the object of thoughtful care. But she questioned if to go publicly to dine with Giles Winterborne were not a proposal due rather to his unsophistication than to his discretion. She said gently, that she would much prefer his ordering her lunch at some place, and then coming to tell her it was ready, while she remained in the Abbey porch. Giles saw her secret reasoning, thought how hopelessly blind to propriety he was beside her, and went to do as she wished.

He was not absent more than ten minutes, and found Grace where he had left her. "It will be quite ready by the time you get there," he said, and told her the name of the inn at which the meal had been ordered, which was one that she had never heard of.

"I'll find it by inquiry," said Grace, setting out.

"And shall I see you again?"

"Oh, yes—come to me there. It will not be like going together. I shall want you to find my father's man and the gig for me."

He waited on some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, till he thought her lunch ended, and that he might fairly take advantage of her invitation to start her on her way home. He went straight to *The Three Tuns*—a little tavern in a side street, scrupulously clean, but humble and inexpensive. On his way he had an occasional misgiving as to whether the place had been elegant enough for her; and as soon as he entered it, and saw her ensconced there, he perceived that he had blundered.

Grace was seated in the only dining-room that the simple old hostelry could boast of, which was also a general parlour on market days: a long,

low apartment, with a sanded floor herring-boned with a broom: a wide, red-curtained window to the street, and another to the garden. Grace had retreated to the end of the room looking out upon the latter, the front part being full of a mixed company which had dropped in since he was there.

She was in a mood of the greatest depression. On arriving, and seeing what the tavern was like, she had been taken by surprise; but having gone too far to retreat, she had heroically entered and sat down on the well-scrubbed settle, opposite the narrow table, with its knives and steel forks, tin pepper-boxes, blue salt-cellars, and posters advertising the sale of bullocks against the wall. The last time that she had taken any meal in a public place it had been with Fitzpiers at the grand, new Earl of Wessex Hotel in that town, after a two months' roaming and sojourning at the gigantic hotels of the Continent. How could she have expected any other kind of accommodation in present circumstances than such as Giles had provided? And yet how unprepared she was for this change! The tastes that she had acquired from Fitzpiers had been imbibed so subtly that she hardly knew she possessed them till confronted by this contrast. The elegant Fitzpiers, in fact, at that very moment owed a long bill at the above-mentioned hotel for the luxurious style in which he used to put her up there whenever they drove to Sherton. But such is social sentiment, that she had been quite comfortable under those debt-impending conditions, whilst she felt humiliated by her present situation, which Winterborne had paid for honestly on the nail.

He had noticed in a moment that she shrank from her position, and all his pleasure was gone. It was the same susceptibility over again which had spoiled his Christmas party long ago.

But he did not know that this re-

crudescence was only the casual result of Grace's apprenticeship to what she was determined to learn in spite of it—a consequence of one of those sudden surprises which confront everybody bent upon turning over a new leaf. She had finished her lunch, which he saw had been a very mincing performance; and he brought her out of the house as soon as he could.

"Now," he said, with great sad eyes, "you have not finished at all well, I know. Come round to the Earl of Wessex. I'll order a tea there. I did not remember that what was good enough for me was not good enough for you."

Her face faded into an aspect of deep distress when she saw what had happened. "Oh, no, Giles," she said with extreme pathos: "certainly not. Why do you—say that, when you know better? You *ever* will misunderstand me."

"Indeed, that's not so, Mrs. Fitzpiers. Can you deny that you felt out of place at The Three Tuns?"

"I don't know! Well, since you make me speak, I do not deny it."

"And yet I have felt at home there these twenty years. Your husband used always to take you to the Earl of Wessex, did he not?"

"Yes," she reluctantly admitted. How could she explain in the street of a market-town that it was her superficial and transitory taste which had been offended, and not her nature or her affection? Fortunately, or unfortunately, at that moment they saw Melbury's man driving vacantly along the street in search of her, the hour having passed at which he had been told to take her up. Winterborne hailed him, and she was powerless then to prolong the discourse. She entered the vehicle sadly, and the horse trotted away.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ALL night did Winterborne think over that unsatisfactory ending of a pleasant time, forgetting the pleasant

time itself. He feared anew that they could never be happy together, even should she be free to choose him. She was accomplished: he was unrefined. It was the original difficulty, which he was too sensitive to recklessly ignore, as some men would have done in his place.

He was one of those silent, unobtrusive beings who want little from others in the way of favour or condescension, and perhaps on that very account scrutinise those others' behaviour too closely. He was not versatile, but one in whom a hope or belief which had once had its rise, meridian, and decline, seldom again exactly recurred, as in the breasts of more sanguine mortals. He had once worshipped her, laid out his life to suit her, wooed her, and lost her. Though it was with almost the same zest, it was with not quite the same hope, that he had begun to tread the old tracks again, and allowed himself to be so charmed with her that day.

Move another step towards her he would not. He would even repulse her—as a tribute to conscience. It would be sheer sin to let her prepare a pitfall for her happiness not much smaller than the first by inveigling her into a union with such as he. Her poor father was now blind to these subtleties, which he had formerly beheld as in noontide light. It was his own duty to declare them—for her dear sake.

Grace, too, had a very uncomfortable night, and her solicitous embarrassment was not lessened the next morning when another letter from her father was put into her hands. Its tenour was an intenser strain of the one that had preceded it. After stating how extremely glad he was to hear that she was better, and able to get out of doors, he went on:

"This is a wearisome business, the solicitor we have come to see being out of town. I do not know when I shall get home. My great anxiety in this delay is still lest you should lose Giles Winterborne. I cannot rest at night for thinking that while our business is

hanging fire he may become estranged, or go away from the neighbourhood. I have set my heart upon seeing him your husband, if you ever have another. Do then, Grace, give him some temporary encouragement, even though it is over-early. For when I consider the past I do think God will forgive me and you for being a little forward. I have another reason for this, my dear. I feel myself going rapidly down hill, and late affairs have still further helped me that way. And until this thing is done I cannot rest in peace."

He added a postscript:

"I have just heard that the solicitor is to be seen to-morrow. Possibly, therefore, I shall return in the evening after you get this."

The paternal longing ran on all fours with her own desire; and yet in forwarding it yesterday she had been on the brink of giving offence. While craving to be a country girl again just as her father requested; to put off the old Eve, the fastidious miss—or rather madam—completely, her first attempt had been beaten by the unexpected vitality of that fastidiousness. Her father on returning and seeing the trifling coolness of Giles would be sure to say that the same perversity which had led her to make difficulties about marrying Fitzpiers was now prompting her to blow hot and cold with poor Winterborne.

If the latter had been the most subtle hand at touching the stops of her delicate soul instead of one who had just bound himself to let her drift away from him again (if she would) on the wind of her estranging education, he could not have acted more seductively than he did that day. He chanced to be superintending some temporary work in a field opposite her windows. She could not discover what he was doing, but she read his mood keenly and truly: she could see in his coming and going an air of determined abandonment of the whole landscape that lay in her direction.

Oh, how she longed to make it up with him! Her father coming in the evening—which meant, she supposed, that all formalities would be in train, her marriage virtually annulled, and she be free to be won again—how

could she look him in the face if he should see them estranged thus?

It was a fair green evening in June. She was seated in the garden, in the rustic chair which stood under the laurel-bushes, made of peeled oak branches that came to Melbury's premises as refuse after barking-time. The mass of full-juiced leafage on the heights around her was just swayed into faint gestures by a nearly spent wind which, even in its enfeebled state, did not reach her shelter. All day she had expected Giles to call—to inquire how she had got home, or something or other; but he had not come. And he still tantalised her by going athwart and across that orchard opposite. She could see him as she sat.

A slight diversion was presently created by Creedle bringing him a letter. She knew from this that Creedle had just come from Sheraton, and had called as usual at the post-office for anything that had arrived by the afternoon post, of which there was no delivery at Hintock. She pondered on what the letter might contain—particularly whether it were a second refresher for Winterborne from her father, like her own of the morning.

But it appeared to have no bearing upon herself whatever. Giles read its contents; and almost immediately turned away to a gap in the hedge of the orchard—if that could be called a hedge which, owing to the drippings of the trees, was little more than a bank with a bush upon it here and there. He entered the plantation, and was no doubt going that way homeward to the mysterious hut he occupied on the other side of the woodland.

The sad sands were running swiftly through Time's glass; she had often felt it in these latter days; and, like Giles, she felt it doubly now after the solemn and pathetic reminder in her father's communication. Her freshness would pass, the long-suffering devotion of Giles might suddenly end—might end that very hour. Men were so strange.

The thought took away from her all her former reticence, and made her action bold. She started from her seat. If the little breach, quarrel, or whatever it might be called, of yesterday, was to be healed up it must be done by her on the instant. She crossed into the orchard, and clambered through the gap after Giles, just as he was diminishing to a faun-like figure under the green canopy and over the brown floor.

Grace had been wrong—very far wrong—in assuming that the letter had no reference to herself because Giles had turned away into the wood after its perusal. It was, sad to say, because the missive had so much reference to herself that he had thus turned away. He feared that his grieved discomfiture might be observed. The letter was from Beaucock, written a few hours later than Melbury's to his daughter. It announced failure.

Giles had once done that thriftless man a good turn, and now was the moment when Beaucock had chosen to remember it, in his own way. During his absence in town with Melbury, the lawyer's clerk had naturally heard a great deal of the timber-merchant's family scheme of justice to Giles, and his communication was to inform Winterborne at the earliest possible moment that their attempt had failed, in order that the young man should not place himself in a false position towards Grace in the belief of its coming success. The news was, in sum, that Fitzpiers's conduct had not been sufficiently cruel to Grace to enable her to snap the bond. She was apparently doomed to be his wife till the end of the chapter.

Winterborne quite forgot his superficial differences with the poor girl under the warm rush of deep and distracting love for her which the almost tragical information engendered.

To renounce her for ever—that was then the end of it for him, after all. There was no longer any question about suitability, or room for tiffs on

petty tastes. The curtain had fallen again between them. She could not be his. The cruelty of their late revived hope was now terrible. How could they all have been so simple as to suppose this thing could be done?

It was at this moment that, hearing some one coming behind him, he turned and saw her hastening on between the thickets. He perceived in an instant that she did not know the blighting news.

"Giles, why didn't you come across to me?" she asked with arch reproach. "Didn't you see me sitting there ever so long?"

"Oh, yes," he said in unprepared, extemporized tones, for her unexpected presence caught him without the slightest plan of behaviour in the conjuncture. His manner made her think that she had been too chiding in her speech; and a mild scarlet wave passed over her as she resolved to soften it.

"I have had another letter from my father," she hastened to continue. "He thinks he may come home this evening. And—in view of his hopes—it will grieve him if there is any little difference between us, Giles."

"There is none," he said, sadly regarding her from the face downwards as he pondered how to lay the cruel truth bare.

"Still—I fear you have not quite forgiven me about my being uncomfortable at the inn."

"I have, Grace, I'm sure."

"But you speak in quite an unhappy way," she returned, coming up close to him with the most winning of the many pretty airs that appertained to her. "Don't you think you will ever be happy, Giles?"

He did not reply for some instants. "When the sun shines on the north front of Sherton Abbey—that's when my happiness will come to me!" said he, staring as it were into the earth.

"But—then that means that there is something more than my offending you in not liking The Three Tuns.

If it is because I—did not like to let you kiss me in the Abbey—well, you know, Giles, that it was not on account of my cold feelings, but because I did certainly, just then, think it was rather premature, in spite of my poor father. That was the true reason—the sole one. But I do not want to be hard—God knows I do not," she said, her voice fluctuating. "And perhaps—as I am on the verge of freedom—I am not right, after all, in thinking there is any harm in your kissing me."

"Oh, Heaven!" said Winterborne to himself. His head was turned askance as he still resolutely regarded the ground. For the last several minutes he had seen this great temptation approaching him in regular siege; and now it had come. The wrong, the social sin, of now taking advantage of the offer of her lips, had a magnitude, in the eyes of one whose life had been so primitive, so ruled by purest household laws as Giles's, which can hardly be explained.

"Did you say anything?" she asked timidly.

"Oh, no—only that —"

"You mean that it must be settled, since my father is coming home?" she said gladly.

Winterborne, though fighting valiantly against himself all this while—though he would have protected Grace's good repute as the apple of his eye, was a man; and, as Desdemona said, men are not gods. In face of the agonising seductiveness shown by her, in her unenlightened school-girl simplicity about the laws and ordinances, he betrayed a man's weakness. Since it was so—since it had come to this, that Grace, deeming herself free to do it, was virtually asking him to demonstrate that he loved her—since he could demonstrate it only too truly—since life was short and love was strong—he gave way to the temptation, notwithstanding that he perfectly well knew her to be wedded irrevocably to Fitzpiers. Indeed he cared for nothing

past or future, simply accepting the present and what it brought, desiring once in his life to clasp in his arms her he had watched over and loved so long.

She started back suddenly from his embrace, influenced by a sort of inspiration. "Oh, I suppose," she stammered, "that I am really free?—that this is right? Is there *really* a new law? Father cannot have been too sanguine in saying——"

He did not answer, and a moment afterwards Grace burst into tears in spite of herself. "Oh, why does not my father come home and explain!" she sobbed, "and let me know clearly what I am! It is too trying, this, to ask me to—and then to leave me so long in so vague a state that I do not know what to do, and perhaps do wrong!"

Winterborne felt like a very Cain, over and above his previous sorrow. How he had sinned against her in not telling her what he knew! He turned aside: the feeling of his cruelty mounted higher and higher. How could he have dreamt of kissing her? He could hardly refrain from tears. Surely nothing more pitiable had ever been known than the condition of this poor young thing, now as heretofore the victim of her father's well-meant but blundering policy.

Even in the hour of Melbury's greatest assurance Winterborne had harboured a suspicion that no law, new or old, could undo Grace's marriage without her appearance in public; though he was not sufficiently sure of what might have been enacted to destroy by his own words her pleasing idea that a mere dash of the pen, on her father's testimony, was going to be sufficient. But he had never suspected the sad fact that the position was irremediable.

Poor Grace, perhaps feeling that she had indulged in too much fluster for a mere kiss, calmed herself at finding how grave he was. "I am glad we are friends again anyhow," she said smiling through her tears.

"Giles, if you had only shown half the boldness before I married that you show now you would have carried me off for your own, first instead of second. If we do marry I hope you will never think badly of me for encouraging you a little, but my father is so impatient, you know, as his years and infirmities increase, that he will wish to see us a little advanced when he comes. That is my only excuse."

To Winterborne all this was sadder than it was sweet. How could she so trust her father's conjectures? He did not know how to tell her the truth and shame himself. And yet he felt that it must be done. "We may have been wrong," he began, almost fearfully, "in supposing that it can all be carried out whilst we stay here at Hintock. I am not sure but that people may have to appear in a public court even under the new Act; and if there should be any difficulty and we cannot marry after all——"

Her cheeks became slowly bloodless. "Oh, Giles," she said, grasping his arm, "you have heard something! What—cannot my father conclude it there and now? Surely he has done it? Oh, Giles, Giles, don't deceive me. What terrible position am I in?"

He could not tell her, try as he would. The sense of her implicit trust in his honour absolutely disabled him. "I cannot inform you," he murmured, his voice as husky as that of the leaves under foot. "Your father will soon be here. Then we shall know. I will take you home."

Inexpressibly dear as she was to him he offered her his arm with the most reserved air, as he added correctly, "I will take you at any rate into the drive."

Thus they walked on together, Grace vibrating between happiness and misgiving. It was only a few minutes walk to where the drive ran, and they had hardly descended into it when they heard a voice behind them cry, "Take out that arm!"

For a moment they did not heed,

and the voice repeated more loudly and hoarsely :

"Take out that arm !"

It was Melbury's. He had returned sooner than they expected and now came up to them. Grace's hand had been withdrawn like lightning on her hearing the second command. "I don't blame you, I don't blame you," he said, in the weary cadence of one broken down with scourgings. "But you two must walk together no more—I have been surprised—I have been cruelly deceived—Giles, don't say anything to me ; but go away !"

He was evidently not aware that Winterborne had known the truth before he brought it ; and Giles would not stay to discuss it with him then. When the young man had gone Melbury took his daughter indoors to the room he used as his office. There he sat down, and bent over the slope of the bureau, her bewildered gaze fixed upon him.

When Melbury had recovered a little he said, "You are now as ever Fitzpiers's wife. I was deluded. He has not done you *enough* harm. You are still subject to his beck and call."

"Then let it be, and never mind, father," she said with dignified sorrow. "I can bear it. It is your trouble that grieves me most !" She stooped over him, and put her arm round his neck, which distressed Melbury still more. "I don't mind at all what comes to me," Grace continued ; "whose wife I am, or whose I am not. I do love Giles ; I cannot help that ; and I have gone farther with him than I should have done if I had known exactly how things were. But I do not reproach you."

"Then Giles did not tell you ?" said Melbury.

"No," said she. "He could not have known it. His behaviour to me proved that he did not know."

Her father said nothing more, and Grace went away to the solitude of her chamber.

Her heavy disquietude had many shapes ; and for a time she put aside

the dominant fact to think of her too free conduct towards Giles. His love-making had been brief as it was sweet ; but would he on reflection condemn her for forwardness ? How could she have been so simple as to suppose she was in a position to behave as she had done ! Thus she mentally blamed her ignorance ; and yet in the centre of her heart she blessed it a little for what it had momentarily brought her.

CHAPTER XL.

LIFE among the people involved in these events seemed to be suppressed and hide-bound for a while. Grace seldom showed herself outside the house, never outside the garden ; for she feared she might encounter Giles Winterborne ; and that she could not bear.

This pensive intramural existence of the self-constituted nun appeared likely to continue for an indefinite time. She had learnt that there was one possibility in which her formerly imagined position might become real, and only one ; that her husband's absence should continue long enough to amount to positive desertion. But she never allowed her mind to dwell much upon the thought ; still less did she deliberately hope for such a result. Her regard for Winterborne had been rarefied by the shock which followed its avowal into an ethereal emotion that had little to do with living and doing.

As for Giles he was lying—or rather sitting—ill at his hut. A feverish indisposition which had been hanging about him for some time, the result of a chill caught the previous winter, seemed to acquire virulence with the prostration of his hopes. But not a soul knew of his languor, and he did not think the case serious enough to send for a medical man. After a few days he was better again, and crept about his home in a great-coat, attending to his simple wants as usual with his own hands. So matters stood

when the limpid inertion of Grace's pool-like existence was disturbed as by a geyser. She received a letter from Fitzpiers.

Such a terrible letter it was in its import, though couched in the gentlest language. In his absence Grace had grown to regard him with toleration, and her relation to him with equanimity, till she had almost forgotten how trying his presence would be. He wrote briefly and unaffectedly: he made no excuses, but informed her that he was living quite alone, and had been led to think that they ought to be together, if she would make up her mind to forgive him. He therefore purported to cross the Channel to Budmouth by the steamer on a day he named, which she found to be three days after the time of her present reading.

He said that he could not come to Hintock for obvious reasons, which her father would understand even better than herself. As the only alternative, she was to be on the quay to meet the steamer when it arrived from the opposite coast, probably about half an hour before midnight, bringing with her any luggage she might require; join him there, and pass with him into the twin vessel, which left immediately the other entered the harbour; returning thus with him to his Continental dwelling-place, which he did not name. He had no intention of showing himself on land at all.

The troubled Grace took the letter to her father, who now continued for long hours by the fireless summer chimney-corner, as if he thought it were winter, the pitcher of cider standing beside him, mostly untasted, and coated with a film of dust. After reading it he looked up,

"You sha'n't go," said he.

"I had felt I would not," she answered. "But I did not know what you would say."

"If he comes and lives in England, not too near here, and in a respectable way, and wants you to come to him, I am not sure that I'll oppose him in

wishing it," muttered Melbury. "I'd stint myself to keep you both in a genteel and seemly style. But go abroad you never shall with my consent."

There the question rested that day. Grace was unable to reply to her husband in the absence of an address, and the morrow came, and the next day, and the evening on which he had requested her to meet him. Throughout the whole of it she remained within the four walls of her room.

The sense of her harassment, carking doubt of what might be impending, hung like a cowl of blackness over the Melbury household. They spoke almost in whispers, and wondered what Fitzpiers would do next. It was the hope of every one that, finding she did not arrive, he would return again to France; and as for Grace, she was willing to write to him on the most kindly terms if he would only keep away.

The night passed, Grace lying tense and wide awake, and her relatives, in great part, likewise. When they met the next morning they were pale and anxious, though neither speaking of the subject which occupied all their thoughts. The day passed as quietly as the previous ones, and she began to think that in the rank caprice of his moods he had abandoned the idea of getting her to join him as quickly as it was formed. All on a sudden, some person who had just come from Sheraton entered the house with the news that Mr. Fitzpiers was on his way home to Hintock. He had been seen hiring a carriage at the Earl of Wessex Hotel.

Her father and Grace were both present when the intelligence was announced.

"Now," said Melbury, "we must make the best of what has been a very bad matter. The man is repenting: the partner of his shame, I hear, is gone away from him to Switzerland, so that chapter of his life is probably over. If he chooses to make a home for ye I think you should not say him

nay, Grace. Certainly he cannot very well live at Hintock without a blow to his pride; but if he can bear that, and likes Hintock best, why, there's the empty wing of the house as it was before."

"Oh, father!" said Grace, turning white with dismay.

"Why not?" said he, a little of his former doggedness returning. He was, in truth, disposed to somewhat more leniency towards her husband just now than he had shown formerly, from a conviction that he had treated him over roughly in his anger. "Surely it is the most respectable thing to do?" he continued. "I don't like this state that you are in—neither married nor single. It hurts me, and it hurts you, and it will always be remembered against us in Hintock. There has never been any scandal like it in the family before."

"He will be here in less than an hour," murmured Grace. The twilight of the room prevented her father seeing the despondent misery of her face. The one intolerable condition, the condition she had deprecated above all others, was that of Fitzpiers's reinstatement there. "Oh, I won't, I won't see him," she said, sinking down. She was almost hysterical.

"Try if you cannot," he returned moodily.

"Oh, yes, I will, I will," she went on inconsequently. "I'll try;" and jumping up suddenly she left the room.

In the darkness of the apartment to which she flew nothing could have been seen during the next half hour; but from a corner a quick breathing was audible from this impressible creature, who combined modern nerves with primitive emotions, and was doomed by such co-existence to be numbered among the distressed, and to take her scourings to their exquisite extremity.

The window was open. On this quiet, late summer evening, whatever sound arose in so secluded a district—the chirp of a bird, a call from a voice, the turning of a wheel—extended over

bush and tree to unwonted distances. Very few sounds did arise. But as Grace invisibly breathed in the brown glooms of the chamber, the small remote noise of light wheels came in to her, accompanied by the trot of a horse on the turnpike road. There seemed to be a sudden hitch or pause in the progress of the vehicle, which was what first drew her attention to it. She knew the point whence the sound proceeded—the hill-top over which travellers passed on their way hitherward from Sherton Abbas—the place at which she had emerged from the wood with Mrs. Charmond. Grace slid along the floor, and bent her head over the window-sill, listening with open lips. The carriage had stopped, and she heard a man use exclamatory words. Then another said, "What the devil is the matter with the horse?" She recognised the voice as her husband's.

The accident, such as it had been, was soon remedied, and the carriage could be heard descending the hill on the Hintock side, soon to turn into the lane leading out of the highway, and then into the "drong" which led out of the lane to the house where she was.

A spasm passed through Grace. The Daphnean instinct, exceptionally strong in her as a girl, had been revived by her widowed seclusion; and it was not lessened by her affronted sentiments towards the comer, and her regard for another man. She opened some little ivory tablets that lay on the dressing-table, scribbled in pencil on one of them, "I am gone to visit one of my school-friends," gathered a few toilet necessities into a hand-bag, and, not three minutes after that voice had been heard, her slim form, hastily wrapped up from observation, might have been seen passing out of the back door of Melbury's house. Thence she skimmed up the garden-path, through the gap in the hedge, and into the mossy cart-track under the trees which led into the depth of the woods.

The leaves overhead were now in their latter green—so opaque, that it was darker at some of the densest spots than in winter time, scarce a crevice existing by which a ray could get down to the ground. But in open places she could see well enough. Summer was ending: in the daytime singing insects hung in every sunbeam: vegetation was heavy nightly with globes of dew; and after showers creeping damps and twilight chills came up from the hollows. The plantations were always weird at this hour of eve—more spectral far than in the leafless season, when there were fewer masses and more minute lineality. The smooth surfaces of glossy plants came out like weak, lidless eyes: there were strange faces and figures from expiring lights that had somehow wandered into the canopied obscurity; while now and then low peeps of the sky between the trunks were like sheeted shapes, and on the tips of boughs sat faint cloven tongues.

But Grace's fear just now was not imaginative or spiritual; and she heeded these impressions but little. She went on as silently as she could, avoiding the hollows wherein leaves had accumulated, and stepping upon soundless moss and grass-tufts. She paused breathlessly once or twice, and fancied that she could hear, above the beat of her strumming pulse, the vehicle containing Fitzpiers turning in at the gate of her father's premises. She hastened on again.

The Hintock woods owned by Mrs. Charmond were presently left behind, and those into which she next plunged were divided from the latter by a bank, from whose top the hedge had long ago perished—starved for want of sun. It was with some caution that Grace now walked, though she was quite free from any of the commonplace timidity of her ordinary pilgrimages to such spots. She feared no lurking harms, but that her effort would be all in vain, and her return to the house rendered imperative.

She had walked between three and

four miles when that prescriptive comfort and relief to wanderers in woods—a distant light—broke at last upon her searching eyes. It was so very small as to be almost sinister to a stranger, but to her it was what she sought. She pushed forward, and the dim outline of a dwelling was disclosed.

The house was a square cot of one story only, sloping up on all sides to a chimney in the midst. It had formerly been the home of a charcoal-burner, in times when that fuel was still used in the county-houses. Its only appurtenance was a paled inclosure, there being no garden, the shade of the trees preventing the growth of vegetables. She advanced to the window whence the rays of light proceeded, and the shutters being as yet unclosed, she could survey the whole interior through the panes.

The room within was kitchen, parlour, and scullery all in one: the natural sandstone floor was worn into hills and dales by long treading, so that none of the furniture stood level, and the table slanted like a desk. A fire burnt on the hearth, in front of which revolved the skinned carcase of a rabbit, suspended by a string from a nail. Leaning with one arm on the mantel-shelf stood Winterborne, his eyes on the roasting animal, his face so rapt that speculation could build nothing on it concerning his thoughts, more than that they were not with the scene before him. She thought his features had changed a little since she saw them last. The firelight did not enable her to perceive that they were positively haggard.

Grace's throat emitted a gasp of relief at finding the result so nearly as she had hoped. She went to the door and tapped lightly.

He seemed to be accustomed to the noises of woodpeckers, squirrels, and such small creatures, for he took no notice of her tiny signal, and she knocked again. This time he came and opened the door. When the light of the room fell upon her face he

started; and, hardly knowing what he did, crossed the threshold to her, placing his hands upon her two arms, while surprise, joy, alarm, sadness, chased through him by turns. With Grace it was the same: even in this stress there was the fond fact that they had met again. Thus they stood,

“Long tears upon their faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.”

He broke the silence by saying in a whisper, “Come in.”

“No, no, Giles!” she answered hurriedly stepping yet further back from the door. “I am passing by—and I have called on you—I won’t enter. Will you help me? I am afraid. I want to get by a roundabout way to Sherton, and so to Exbury. I have a school-fellow there—but I cannot get to Sherton alone. Oh, if you will only accompany me a little way! Don’t condemn me, Giles, and be offended! I was obliged to come to you because—I have no other help here. Three months ago you were my lover: now you are only my friend. The law has stepped in, and forbidden what we thought of. It must not be. But we can act honestly, and yet you can be my friend for one little hour! I have no other—”

She could get no further. Covering her eyes with one hand, by an effort of repression she wept silent tears, without a sigh or sob. Winterborne took her other hand. “What has happened?” he said.

“He has come.”

There was a stillness as of death, till Winterborne asked, “You mean this, Grace—that I am to help you to get away?”

“Yes,” said she. “Appearance is no matter, when the reality is right. I have said to myself, I can trust you.”

Giles knew from this that she did not suspect his treachery—if it could be called such—earlier in the summer, when they met for the last time as lovers; and in the intensity of his contrition for that tender wrong, he determined to deserve her faith now at least, and so wipe out that reproach from his conscience. “I’ll come at once,” he said. “I’ll light a lantern.”

He unhooked a dark lantern from a nail under the eaves, and she did not notice how his hand shook with the slight strain, or dream that in making this offer he was taxing a convalescence which could ill afford such self-sacrifice. The lantern was lit and they started.

(To be continued.)